The Country Wife

by William Wycherley

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Act I

Scene I

Horner’s lodging.

Enter Horner, and Quack following him at a distance. Horner Aside. A quack is as fit for a pimp, as a midwife for a bawd; they are still but in their way, both helpers of nature.—Aloud. Well, my dear doctor, hast thou done what I desired? Quack I have undone you forever with the women, and reported you throughout the whole town as bad as an eunuch, with as much trouble as if I had made you one in earnest. Horner But have you told all the midwives you know, the orange wenches at the playhouses, the city husbands, and old fumbling keepers of this end of the town? for they’ll be the readiest to report it. Quack I have told all the chambermaids, waiting-women, tire-women, and old women of my acquaintance; nay, and whispered it as a secret to ’em, and to the whisperers of Whitehall; so that you need not doubt ’twill spread, and you will be as odious to the handsome young women, as— Horner As the smallpox. Well— Quack And to the married women of this end of the town, as— Horner As the great one; nay, as their own husbands. Quack And to the city dames, as aniseed Robin, of filthy and contemptible memory; and they will frighten their children with your name, especially their females. Horner And cry, Horner’s coming to carry you away. I am only afraid ’twill not be believed. You told ’em it was by an English-French disaster, and an English-French chirurgeon, who has given me at once not only a cure, but an antidote for the future against that damned malady, and that worse distemper, love, and all other women’s

evils? Quack Your late journey into France has made it the more credible, and your being here a fortnight before you appeared in public, looks as if you apprehended the shame, which I wonder you do not. Well, I have been hired by young gallants to belie ’em t’other way; but you are the first would be thought a man unfit for women. Horner Dear Mr. Doctor, let vain rogues be contented only to be thought abler men than they are, generally ’tis all the pleasure they have; but mine lies another way. Quack You take, methinks, a very preposterous way to it, and as ridiculous as if we operators in physic should put forth bills to disparage our medicaments, with hopes to gain customers. Horner Doctor, there are quacks in love as well as physic, who get but the fewer and worse patients for their boasting; a good name is seldom got by giving it one’s self; and women, no more than honour, are compassed by bragging. Come, come, Doctor, the wisest lawyer never discovers the merits of his cause till the trial; the wealthiest man conceals his riches, and the cunning gamester his play. Shy husbands and keepers, like old rooks, are not to be cheated but by a new unpractised trick: false friendship will pass now no more than false dice upon ’em; no, not in the city. Enter Boy. Boy There are two ladies and a gentleman coming up. Exit. Horner A pox! some unbelieving sisters of my former acquaintance, who, I am afraid, expect their sense should be satisfied of the falsity of the report. No—this formal fool and women! Enter Sir Jasper Fidget, Lady Fidget, and Mrs. Dainty Fidget. Quack His wife and sister. Sir Jasper My coach breaking just now before your door, sir, I look upon as an occasional reprimand to me, sir, for not kissing your hands, sir, since your coming out of France, sir; and so my disaster, sir, has been my good fortune, sir; and this is my wife and sister, sir. Horner What then, sir? Sir Jasper My lady, and sister, sir.—Wife, this is Master Horner. Lady Fidget Master Horner, husband! Sir Jasper My lady, my Lady Fidget, sir. Horner So, sir. Sir Jasper Won’t you be acquainted with her, sir?—Aside. So, the report is true, I find, by his coldness or aversion to the sex; but I’ll play the wag with him.—Aloud. Pray salute my wife, my lady, sir. Horner I will kiss no man’s

wife, sir, for him, sir; I have taken my eternal leave, sir, of the sex already, sir. Sir Jasper Aside. Ha! ha! ha! I'll plague him yet.—Aloud. Not know my wife, sir? Horner I do know your wife, sir; she's a woman, sir, and consequently a monster, sir, a greater monster than a husband, sir. Sir Jasper A husband! how, sir? Horner So, sir; but I make no more cuckolds, sir. Makes horns. Sir Jasper Ha! ha! ha! Mercury! Mercury! Lady Fidget Pray, Sir Jasper, let us be gone from this rude fellow. Mrs. Dainty Who, by his breeding, would think he had ever been in France? Lady Fidget Foh! he's but too much a French fellow, such as hate women of quality and virtue for their love to their husbands. Sir Jasper, a woman is hated by 'em as much for loving her husband as for loving their money. But pray let's be gone. Horner You do well, madam; for I have nothing that you came for. I have brought over not so much as a bawdy picture, no new postures, nor the second part of the Ecole des Filles; nor— Quack Hold, for shame, sir! what d'ye mean? you'll ruin yourself forever with the sex—Apart to Horner. Sir Jasper Ha! ha! ha! he hates women perfectly, I find. Mrs. Dainty What pity 'tis he should! Lady Fidget Ay, he's a base fellow for't. But affectation makes not a woman more odious to them than virtue. Horner Because your virtue is your greatest affectation, madam. Lady Fidget How, you saucy fellow! would you wrong my honour? Horner If I could. Lady Fidget How d'ye mean, sir? Sir Jasper Ha! ha! ha! no, he can't wrong your ladyship's honour, upon my honour. He, poor man—hark you in your ear—a mere eunuch. Whispers. Lady Fidget O filthy French beast! foh! foh! why do we stay? let's be gone: I can't endure the sight of him. Sir Jasper Stay but till the chairs come; they'll be here presently. Lady Fidget No, no. Sir Jasper Nor can I stay longer. 'Tis, let me see, a quarter and half quarter of a minute past eleven. The council will be sat; I must away. Business must be preferred always before love and ceremony with the wise, Mr. Horner. Horner And the impotent, Sir Jasper. Sir Jasper Ay, ay, the impotent, Master Horner; hah! hah! hah! Lady Fidget What, leave us with a filthy man alone in his lodgings? Sir Jasper He's an innocent man now, you

know. Pray stay, I'll hasten the chairs to you.—Mr. Horner, your servant; I should be glad to see you at my house. Pray come and dine with me, and play at cards with my wife after dinner; you are fit for women at that game yet, ha! ha!—Aside. 'Tis as much a husband's prudence to provide innocent diversion for a wife as to hinder her unlawful pleasures; and he had better employ her than let her employ herself.—Aloud. Farewell. Horner Your servant, Sir Jasper. Exit Sir Jasper. Lady Fidget I will not stay with him, foh!— Horner Nay, madam, I beseech you stay, if it be but to see I can be as civil to ladies yet as they would desire. Lady Fidget No, no, foh! you cannot be civil to ladies. Mrs. Dainty You as civil as ladies would desire? Lady Fidget No, no, no, foh! foh! foh! Exeunt Lady Fidget and Mrs. Dainty Fidget. Quack Now, I think, I, or you yourself, rather, have done your business with the women. Horner Thou art an ass. Don't you see already, upon the report, and my carriage, this grave man of business leaves his wife in my lodgings, invites me to his house and wife, who before would not be acquainted with me out of jealousy? Quack Nay, by this means you may be the more acquainted with the husbands, but the less with the wives. Horner Let me alone; if I can but abuse the husbands, I'll soon disabuse the wives. Stay—I'll reckon you up the advantages I am like to have by my stratagem. First, I shall be rid of all my old acquaintances, the most insatiable sort of duns, that invade our lodgings in a morning; and next to the pleasure of making a new mistress is that of being rid of an old one, and of all old debts. Love, when it comes to be so, is paid the most unwillingly. Quack Well, you may be so rid of your old acquaintances; but how will you get any new ones? Horner Doctor, thou wilt never make a good chemist, thou art so incredulous and impatient. Ask but all the young fellows of the town if they do not lose more time, like huntsmen, in starting the game, than in running it down. One knows not where to find 'em; who will or will not. Women of quality are so civil, you can hardly distinguish love from good breeding, and a man is often mistaken: but now I can be sure she that shows an aversion to me loves the sport, as those women that are gone,

whom I warrant to be right. And then the next thing is, your women of honour, as you call ’em, are only chary of their reputations, not their persons; and ’tis scandal they would avoid, not men. Now may I have, by the reputation of an eunuch, the privileges of one, and be seen in a lady’s chamber in a morning as early as her husband; kiss virgins before their parents or lovers; and may be, in short, the passe-partout of the town. Now, doctor. Quack Nay, now you shall be the doctor; and your process is so new that we do not know but it may succeed. Horner Not so new neither; probatum est, doctor. Quack Well, I wish you luck, and many patients, whilst I go to mine. Exit. Enter Harcourt and Dorilant. Harcourt Come, your appearance at the play yesterday, has, I hope, hardened you for the future against the women’s contempt, and the men’s raillery; and now you’ll abroad as you were wont. Horner Did I not bear it bravely? Dorilant With a most theatrical impudence, nay, more than the orange-wenches show there, or a drunken vizard-mask, or a great-bellied actress; nay, or the most impudent of creatures, an ill poet; or what is yet more impudent, a secondhand critic. Horner But what say the ladies? have they no pity? Harcourt What ladies? The vizard-masks, you know, never pity a man when all’s gone, though in their service. Dorilant And for the women in the boxes, you’d never pity them when ’twas in your power. Harcourt They say ’tis pity but all that deal with common women should be served so. Dorilant Nay, I dare swear they won’t admit you to play at cards with them, go to plays with ’em, or do the little duties which other shadows of men are wont to do for ’em. Horner What do you call shadows of men? Dorilant Half-men. Horner What, boys? Dorilant Ay, your old boys, old beaux garçons, who, like superannuated stallions, are suffered to run, feed, and whinny with the mares as long as they live, though they can do nothing else. Horner Well, a pox on love and wenching! Women serve but to keep a man from better company. Though I can’t enjoy them, I shall you the more. Good fellowship and friendship are lasting, rational, and manly pleasures. Harcourt For all that, give me some of those pleasures you call effeminate too; they help to relish one another.

Horner They disturb one another. Harcourt No, mistresses are like books. If you pore upon them too much, they doze you, and make you unfit for company; but if used discreetly, you are the fitter for conversation by ’em. Dorilant A mistress should be like a little country retreat near the town; not to dwell in constantly, but only for a night and away, to taste the town the better when a man returns. Horner I tell you, ’tis as hard to be a good fellow, a good friend, and a lover of women, as ’tis to be a good fellow, a good friend, and a lover of money. You cannot follow both, then choose your side. Wine gives you liberty, love takes it away. Dorilant Gad, he’s in the right on’t. Horner Wine gives you joy; love, grief and tortures, besides surgeons. Wine makes us witty; love, only sots. Wine makes us sleep; love breaks it. Dorilant By the world he has reason, Harcourt. Horner Wine makes— Dorilant Ay, wine makes us—makes us princes; love makes us beggars, poor rogues, egad—and wine— Horner So, there’s one converted.—No, no, love and wine, oil and vinegar. Harcourt I grant it; love will still be uppermost. Horner Come, for my part, I will have only those glorious manly pleasures of being very drunk and very slovenly. Enter Boy. Boy Mr. Sparkish is below, sir. Exit. Harcourt What, my dear friend! a rogue that is fond of me only, I think, for abusing him. Dorilant No, he can no more think the men laugh at him than that women jilt him; his opinion of himself is so good. Horner Well, there’s another pleasure by drinking I thought not of—I shall lose his acquaintance, because he cannot drink: and you know ’tis a very hard thing to be rid of him; for he’s one of those nauseous offerers at wit, who, like the worst fiddlers, run themselves into all companies. Harcourt One that, by being in the company of men of sense, would pass for one. Horner And may so to the shortsighted world; as a false jewel amongst true ones is not discerned at a distance. His company is as troublesome to us as a cuckold’s when you have a mind to his wife’s. Harcourt No, the rogue will not let us enjoy one another, but ravishes our conversation; though he signifies no more to’t than Sir Martin Mar-all’s4 gaping, and awkward thrumming upon the lute, does to his man’s voice and music.

Dorilant And to pass for a wit in town shows himself a fool every night to us, that are guilty of the plot. Horner Such wits as he are, to a company of reasonable men, like rooks to the gamesters; who only fill a room at the table, but are so far from contributing to the play, that they only serve to spoil the fancy of those that do. Dorilant Nay, they are used like rooks too, snubbed, checked, and abused; yet the rogues will hang on. Horner A pox on 'em, and all that force nature, and would be still what she forbids 'em! Affectation is her greatest monster. Harcourt Most men are the contraries to that they would seem. Your bully, you see, is a coward with a long sword; the little humbly-fawning physician, with his ebony cane, is he that destroys men. Dorilant The usurer, a poor rogue, possessed of mouldy bonds and mortgages; and we they call spendthrifts, are only wealthy, who lay out his money upon daily new purchases of pleasure. Horner Ay, your arrantest cheat is your trustee or executor; your jealous man, the greatest cuckold; your churchman the greatest atheist; and your noisy pert rogue of a wit, the greatest fop, dullest ass, and worst company, as you shall see; for here he comes. Enter Sparkish. Sparkish How is't, sparks? how is't? Well, faith, Harry, I must rally thee a little, ha! ha! ha! upon the report in town of thee, ha! ha! ha! I can't hold i'faith; shall I speak? Horner Yes; but you'll be so bitter then. Sparkish Honest Dick and Frank here shall answer for me; I will not be extreme bitter, by the universe. Harcourt We will be bound in a ten thousand pound bond, he shall not be bitter at all. Dorilant Nor sharp, nor sweet. Horner What, not downright insipid? Sparkish Nay then, since you are so brisk, and provoke me, take what follows. You must know, I was discoursing and rallying with some ladies yesterday, and they happened to talk of the fine new signs in town— Horner Very fine ladies, I believe. Sparkish Said I, I know where the best new sign is.—Where? says one of the ladies.—In Covent-Garden, I replied.—Said another, In what street?—In Russel-street, answered I.—Lord, says another, I'm sure there was never a fine new sign there yesterday.—Yes, but there was, said I again; and it came out of France, and has been there a fortnight. Dorilant A pox! I

can hear no more, prithee. Horner No, hear him out; let him tune his crowd a while. Harcourt The worst music, the greatest preparation. Sparkish Nay, faith, I'll make you laugh.—It cannot be, says a third lady.—Yes, yes, quoth I again.—Says a fourth lady— Horner Look to't, we'll have no more ladies. Sparkish No—then mark, mark, now. Said I to the fourth, Did you never see Mr. Horner? he lodges in Russel-street, and he's a sign of a man, you know, since he came out of France; ha! ha! ha! Horner But the devil take me if thine be the sign of a jest. Sparkish With that they all fell a-laughing, till they bepissed themselves. What, but it does not move you, methinks? Well, I see one had as good go to law without a witness, as break a jest without a laugher on one's side.—Come, come, sparks, but where do we dine? I have left at Whitehall an earl, to dine with you. Dorilant Why, I thought thou hadst loved a man with a title, better than a suit with a French trimming to't. Harcourt Go to him again. Sparkish No, sir, a wit to me is the greatest title in the world. Horner But go dine with your earl, sir; he may be exception. We are your friends, and will not take it ill to be left, I do assure you. Harcourt Nay, faith, he shall go to him. Sparkish Nay, pray, gentlemen. Dorilant We'll thrust you out, if you won't; what, disappoint anybody for us? Sparkish Nay, dear gentlemen, hear me. Horner No, no, sir, by no means; pray go, sir. Sparkish Why, dear rogues— Dorilant No, no. They all thrust him out of the room. All Ha! ha! ha! Reenter Sparkish. Sparkish But, sparks, pray hear me. What, d'ye think I'll eat then with gay shallow fops and silent coxcombs? I think wit as necessary at dinner, as a glass of good wine; and that's the reason I never have any stomach when I eat alone.—Come, but where do we dine? Horner Even where you will. Sparkish At Chateline's? Dorilant Yes, if you will. Sparkish Or at the Cock?5 Dorilant Yes, if you please. Sparkish Or at the Dog and Partridge? Horner Ay, if you have a mind to't; for we shall dine at neither. Sparkish Pshaw! with your fooling we shall lose the new play; and I would no more miss seeing a new play the first day, than I would miss sitting in the wit's row. Therefore I'll go fetch my mistress, and away. Exit. Enter Pinchwife. Horner Who have we

here? Pinchwife? Pinchwife Gentlemen, your humble servant. Horner Well, Jack, by thy long absence from the town, the grumness of thy countenance, and the slovenliness of thy habit, I should give thee joy, should I not, of marriage? Pinchwife Aside. Death! does he know I'm married too? I thought to have concealed it from him at least.—Aloud. My long stay in the country will excuse my dress; and I have a suit of law that brings me up to town, that puts me out of humour. Besides, I must give Sparkish tomorrow five thousand pounds to lie with my sister. Horner Nay, you country gentlemen, rather than not purchase, will buy anything; and he is a cracked title, if we may quibble. Well, but am I to give thee joy? I heard thou wert married. Pinchwife What then? Horner Why, the next thing that is to be heard, is, thou'rt a cuckold. Pinchwife Insupportable name! Aside. Horner But I did not expect marriage from such a whoremaster as you; one that knew the town so much, and women so well. Pinchwife Why, I have married no London wife. Horner Pshaw! that's all one. That grave circumspection in marrying a country wife, is like refusing a deceitful pampered Smithfield jade, to go and be cheated by a friend in the country. Pinchwife Aside. A pox on him and his simile!—Aloud. At least we are a little surer of the breed there, know what her keeping has been, whether foiled or unsound. Horner Come, come, I have known a clap gotten in Wales; and there are cousins, justices' clerks, and chaplains in the country, I won't say coachmen. But she's handsome and young? Pinchwife Aside. I'll answer as I should do.—Aloud. No, no; she has no beauty but her youth, no attraction but her modesty: wholesome, homely, and huswifely; that's all. Dorilant He talks as like a grazier as he looks. Pinchwife She's too awkward, ill-favoured, and silly to bring to town. Harcourt Then methinks you should bring her to be taught breeding. Pinchwife To be taught! no, sir, I thank you. Good wives and private soldiers should be ignorant—I'll keep her from your instructions, I warrant you. Harcourt The rogue is as jealous as if his wife were not ignorant. Aside. Horner Why, if she be ill-favoured, there will be less danger here for you than by leaving her in the country. We have such variety of

dainties that we are seldom hungry. Dorilant But they have always coarse, constant, swingeing stomachs in the country. Harcourt Foul feeders indeed! Dorilant And your hospitality is great there. Harcourt Open house; every man's welcome. Pinchwife So, so, gentlemen. Horner But prithee, why shouldst thou marry her? If she be ugly, ill-bred, and silly, she must be rich then. Pinchwife As rich as if she brought me twenty thousand pound out of this town; for she'll be as sure not to spend her moderate portion, as a London baggage would be to spend hers, let it be what it would: so 'tis all one. Then, because she's ugly, she's the likelier to be my own; and being ill-bred, she'll hate conversation; and since silly and innocent, will not know the difference betwixt a man of one-and-twenty and one of forty. Horner Nine—to my knowledge. But if she be silly, she'll expect as much from a man of forty-nine, as from him of one-and-twenty. But methinks wit is more necessary than beauty; and I think no young woman ugly that has it, and no handsome woman agreeable without it. Pinchwife 'Tis my maxim, he's a fool that marries; but he's a greater that does not marry a fool. What is wit in a wife good for, but to make a man a cuckold? Horner Yes, to keep it from his knowledge. Pinchwife A fool cannot contrive to make her husband a cuckold. Horner No; but she'll club with a man that can: and what is worse, if she cannot make her husband a cuckold, she'll make him jealous, and pass for one: and then 'tis all one. Pinchwife Well, well, I'll take care for one. My wife shall make me no cuckold, though she had your help, Mr. Horner. I understand the town, sir. Dorilant His help! Aside. Harcourt He's come newly to town, it seems, and has not heard how things are with him. Aside. Horner But tell me, has marriage cured thee of whoring, which it seldom does? Harcourt 'Tis more than age can do. Horner No, the word is, I'll marry and live honest: but a marriage vow is like a penitent gamester's oath, and entering into bonds and penalties to stint himself to such a particular small sum at play for the future, which makes him but the more eager; and not being able to hold out, loses his money again, and his forfeit to boot. Dorilant Ay, ay, a gamester will be a gamester whilst his money lasts, and a

whoremaster whilst his vigour. Harcourt Nay, I have known ’em, when they are broke, and can lose no more, keep a fumbling with the box in their hands to fool with only, and hinder other gamesters. Dorilant That had wherewithal to make lusty stakes. Pinchwife Well, gentlemen, you may laugh at me; but you shall never lie with my wife: I know the town. Horner But prithee, was not the way you were in better? is not keeping better than marriage? Pinchwife A pox on’t! the jades would jilt me, I could never keep a whore to myself. Horner So, then you only married to keep a whore to yourself. Well, but let me tell you, women, as you say, are like soldiers, made constant and loyal by good pay, rather than by oaths and covenants. Therefore I’d advise my friends to keep rather than marry, since too I find, by your example, it does not serve one’s turn; for I saw you yesterday in the eighteenpenny place with a pretty country-wench. Pinchwife How the devil! did he see my wife then? I sat there that she might not be seen. But she shall never go to a play again. Aside. Horner What! dost thou blush, at nine-and-forty, for having been seen with a wench? Dorilant No, faith, I warrant ’twas his wife, which he seated there out of sight; for he’s a cunning rogue, and understands the town. Harcourt He blushes. Then ’twas his wife; for men are now more ashamed to be seen with them in public than with a wench. Pinchwife Hell and damnation! I’m undone, since Horner has seen her, and they know ’twas she. Aside. Horner But prithee, was it thy wife? She was exceeding pretty: I was in love with her at that distance. Pinchwife You are like never to be nearer to her. Your servant, gentlemen. Offers to go. Horner Nay, prithee stay. Pinchwife I cannot; I will not. Horner Come, you shall dine with us. Pinchwife I have dined already. Horner Come, I know thou hast not: I’ll treat thee, dear rogue; thou sha’t spend none of thy Hampshire money today. Pinchwife Treat me! So, he uses me already like his cuckold. Aside. Horner Nay, you shall not go. Pinchwife I must; I have business at home. Exit. Harcourt To beat his wife. He’s as jealous of her, as a Cheapside husband of a Covent-garden wife. Horner

Why, ’tis as hard to find an old whoremaster without jealousy and the gout, as a

young one without fear, or the pox:—

As gout in age from pox in youth proceeds, So wenching past, then jealousy succeeds; The worst disease that love and wenching breeds.

Act II

Scene I

A room in Pinchwife’s house.

Mrs. Margery Pinchwife and Alithea. Pinchwife peeping behind at the door. Mrs. Pinchwife Pray, sister, where are the best fields and woods to walk in, in London? Alithea Aside. A pretty question!—Aloud. Why, sister, Mulberry-garden and St. James’s park; and, for close walks, the New Exchange.6 Mrs. Pinchwife Pray, sister, tell me why my husband looks so grum here in town, and keeps me up so close, and will not let me go a-walking, nor let me wear my best gown yesterday. Alithea O, he’s jealous, sister. Mrs. Pinchwife Jealous! what’s that? Alithea He’s afraid you should love another man. Mrs. Pinchwife How should he be afraid of my loving another man, when he will not let me see any but himself? Alithea Did he not carry you yesterday to a play? Mrs. Pinchwife Ay; but we sat amongst ugly people. He would not let me come near the gentry, who sat under us, so that I could not see ’em. He told me, none but naughty women sat there, whom they toused and moused. But I would have ventured, for all that. Alithea But how did you like the play? Mrs. Pinchwife Indeed I was weary of the play; but I liked hugeously the actors. They are the goodliest, properest men, sister! Alithea O, but you must not like the actors, sister. Mrs. Pinchwife Ay, how should I help it, sister? Pray, sister, when my husband comes in, will you ask leave for me to go a-walking? Alithea A-walking! ha! ha! Lord, a country-gentlewoman’s pleasure is the drudgery of a footpost; and she requires as much airing as her husband’s horses.—Aside. But here comes your

husband: I'll ask, though I'm sure he'll not grant it. Mrs. Pinchwife He says he won't let me go abroad for fear of catching the pox. Alithea Fy! the smallpox you should say. Enter Pinchwife. Mrs. Pinchwife O my dear, dear bud, welcome home! Why dost thou look so fropish? who has nangered thee? Pinchwife You're a fool. Mrs. Pinchwife goes aside, and cries. Alithea Faith, so she is, for crying for no fault, poor tender creature! Pinchwife What, you would have her as impudent as yourself, as arrant a jilflirt, a gadder, a magpie; and to say all, a mere notorious town-woman? Alithea Brother, you are my only censurer; and the honour of your family will sooner suffer in your wife there than in me, though I take the innocent liberty of the town. Pinchwife Hark you, mistress, do not talk so before my wife.—The innocent liberty of the town! Alithea Why, pray, who boasts of any intrigue with me? what lampoon has made my name notorious? what ill women frequent my lodgings? I keep no company with any women of scandalous reputations. Pinchwife No, you keep the men of scandalous reputations company. Alithea Where? would you not have me civil? answer 'em in a box at the plays, in the drawing-room at Whitehall, in St. James'-park, Mulberry-garden, or— Pinchwife Hold, hold! Do not teach my wife where the men are to be found: I believe she's the worse for your town-documents already. I bid you keep her in ignorance, as I do. Mrs. Pinchwife Indeed, be not angry with her, bud, she will tell me nothing of the town, though I ask her a thousand times a day. Pinchwife Then you are very inquisitive to know, I find? Mrs. Pinchwife Not I indeed, dear; I hate London. Our place-house in the country is worth a thousand of't: would I were there again! Pinchwife So you shall, I warrant. But were you not talking of plays and players when I came in?—To Alithea. You are her encourager in such discourses. Mrs. Pinchwife No, indeed, dear; she chid me just now for liking the playermen. Pinchwife Aside. Nay, if she be so innocent as to own to me her liking them, there is no hurt in't.—Aloud. Come, my poor rogue, but thou likest none better than me? Mrs. Pinchwife Yes, indeed, but I do. The playermen are finer folks. Pinchwife But you love none better than me? Mrs.

Pinchwife You are my own dear bud, and I know you. I hate a stranger. Pinchwife Ay, my dear, you must love me only; and not be like the naughty town-women, who only hate their husbands, and love every man else; love plays, visits, fine coaches, fine clothes, fiddles, balls, treats, and so lead a wicked town-life. Mrs. Pinchwife Nay, if to enjoy all these things be a town-life, London is not so bad a place, dear. Pinchwife How! if you love me, you must hate London. Alithea The fool has forbid me discovering to her the pleasures of the town, and he is now setting her agog upon them himself. Aside. Mrs. Pinchwife But, husband, do the town-women love the playermen too? Pinchwife Yes, I warrant you. Mrs. Pinchwife Ay, I warrant you. Pinchwife Why, you do not, I hope? Mrs. Pinchwife No, no, bud. But why have we no playermen in the country? Pinchwife Ha!—Mrs. Minx, ask me no more to go to a play. Mrs. Pinchwife Nay, why, love? I did not care for going: but when you forbid me, you make me, as 'twere, desire it. Alithea So 'twill be in other things, I warrant. Aside. Mrs. Pinchwife Pray let me go to a play, dear. Pinchwife Hold your peace, I wo' not. Mrs. Pinchwife Why, love? Pinchwife Why, I'll tell you. Alithea Nay, if he tell her, she'll give him more cause to forbid her that place. Aside. Mrs. Pinchwife Pray why, dear? Pinchwife First, you like the actors; and the gallants may like you. Mrs. Pinchwife What, a homely country girl! No, bud, nobody will like me. Pinchwife I tell you yes, they may. Mrs. Pinchwife No, no, you jest—I won't believe you: I will go. Pinchwife I tell you then, that one of the lewdest fellows in town, who saw you there, told me he was in love with you. Mrs. Pinchwife Indeed! who, who, pray who was't? Pinchwife I've gone too far, and slipped before I was aware; how overjoyed she is! Aside. Mrs. Pinchwife Was it any Hampshire gallant, any of our neighbours? I promise you, I am beholden to him. Pinchwife I promise you, you lie; for he would but ruin you, as he has done hundreds. He has no other love for women but that; such as he look upon women, like basilisks, but to destroy 'em. Mrs. Pinchwife Ay, but if he loves me, why should he ruin me? answer me to that. Methinks he should not, I would do him no harm. Alithea Ha! ha! ha!

Pinchwife ’Tis very well; but I’ll keep him from doing you any harm, or me either. But here comes company; get you in, get you in. Mrs. Pinchwife But, pray, husband, is he a pretty gentleman that loves me? Pinchwife In, baggage, in. Thrusts her in, and shuts the door. Enter Sparkish and Harcourt. What, all the lewd libertines of the town brought to my lodging by this easy coxcomb! ’sdeath, I’ll not suffer it. Sparkish Here, Harcourt, do you approve my choice?—To Alithea. Dear little rogue, I told you I’d bring you acquainted with all my friends, the wits and—Harcourt salutes her. Pinchwife Ay, they shall know her, as well as you yourself will, I warrant you. Sparkish This is one of those, my pretty rogue, that are to dance at your wedding tomorrow; and him you must bid welcome ever, to what you and I have. Pinchwife Monstrous! Aside. Sparkish Harcourt, how dost thou like her, faith? Nay, dear, do not look down; I should hate to have a wife of mine out of countenance at anything. Pinchwife Wonderful! Aside. Sparkish Tell me, I say, Harcourt, how dost thou like her? Thou hast stared upon her enough, to resolve me. Harcourt So infinitely well, that I could wish I had a mistress too, that might differ from her in nothing but her love and engagement to you. Alithea Sir, Master Sparkish has often told me that his acquaintance were all wits and raillieurs, and now I find it. Sparkish No, by the universe, madam, he does not rally now; you may believe him. I do assure you, he is the honestest, worthiest, truehearted gentlemen—a man of such perfect honour, he would say nothing to a lady he does not mean. Pinchwife Praising another man to his mistress! Aside. Harcourt Sir, you are so beyond expectation obliging, that— Sparkish Nay, egad, I am sure you do admire her extremely; I see’t in your eyes.—He does admire you, madam.—By the world, don’t you? Harcourt Yes, above the world, or the most glorious part of it, her whole sex: and till now I never thought I should have envied you, or any man about to marry, but you have the best excuse for marriage I ever knew. Alithea Nay, now, sir, I’m satisfied you are of the society of the wits and raillieurs, since you cannot spare your friend, even when he is but too civil to you; but the surest sign is,

since you are an enemy to marriage—for that I hear you hate as much as business or bad wine. Harcourt Truly, madam, I was never an enemy to marriage till now, because marriage was never an enemy to me before. Alithea But why, sir, is marriage an enemy to you now? because it robs you of your friend here? for you look upon a friend married, as one gone into a monastery, that is, dead to the world. Harcourt ’Tis indeed, because you marry him; I see, madam, you can guess my meaning. I do confess heartily and openly, I wish it were in my power to break the match; by Heavens I would. Sparkish Poor Frank! Alithea Would you be so unkind to me? Harcourt No, no, ’tis not because I would be unkind to you. Sparkish Poor Frank! no gad, ’tis only his kindness to me. Pinchwife Great kindness to you indeed! Insensible fop, let a man make love to his wife to his face! Aside. Sparkish Come, dear Frank, for all my wife there, that shall be, thou shalt enjoy me sometimes, dear rogue. By my honour, we men of wit condole for our deceased brother in marriage, as much as for one dead in earnest: I think that was prettily said of me, ha, Harcourt?—But come, Frank, be not melancholy for me. Harcourt No, I assure you, I am not melancholy for you. Sparkish Prithee, Frank, dost think my wife that shall be there, a fine person? Harcourt I could gaze upon her till I became as blind as you are. Sparkish How as I am? how? Harcourt Because you are a lover, and true lovers are blind, stock blind. Sparkish True, true; but by the world she has wit too, as well as beauty: go, go with her into a corner, and try if she has wit; talk to her anything, she’s bashful before me. Harcourt Indeed if a woman wants wit in a corner, she has it nowhere. Alithea Sir, you dispose of me a little before your time—Aside to Sparkish. Sparkish Nay, nay, madam, let me have an earnest of your obedience, or—go, go, madam—Harcourt courts Alithea aside. Pinchwife How, sir! if you are not concerned for the honour of a wife, I am for that of a sister; he shall not debauch her. Be a pander to your own wife! bring men to her! let ’em make love before your face! thrust ’em into a corner together, then leave ’em in private! is this your town wit and conduct? Sparkish Ha! ha! ha! a silly wise rogue

would make one laugh more than a stark fool, ha! ha! I shall burst. Nay, you shall not disturb ’em; I’ll vex thee, by the world. Struggles with Pinchwife to keep him from Harcourt and Alithea. Alithea The writings are drawn, sir, settlements made; ’tis too late, sir, and past all revocation. Harcourt Then so is my death. Alithea I would not be unjust to him. Harcourt Then why to me so? Alithea I have no obligation to you. Harcourt My love. Alithea I had his before. Harcourt You never had it; he wants, you see, jealousy, the only infallible sign of it. Alithea Love proceeds from esteem; he cannot distrust my virtue: besides, he loves me, or he would not marry me. Harcourt Marrying you is no more sign of his love than bribing your woman, that he may marry you, is a sign of his generosity. Marriage is rather a sign of interest than love; and he that marries a fortune covets a mistress, not loves her. But if you take marriage for a sign of love, take it from me immediately. Alithea No, now you have put a scruple in my head; but in short, sir, to end our dispute, I must marry him, my reputation would suffer in the world else. Harcourt No; if you do marry him, with your pardon, madam, your reputation suffers in the world, and you would be thought in necessity for a cloak. Alithea Nay, now you are rude, sir.—Mr. Sparkish, pray come hither, your friend here is very troublesome, and very loving. Harcourt Hold! hold!—Aside to Alithea. Pinchwife D’ye hear that? Sparkish Why, d’ye think I’ll seem to be jealous, like a country bumpkin? Pinchwife No, rather be a cuckold, like a credulous cit. Harcourt Madam, you would not have been so little generous as to have told him. Alithea Yes, since you could be so little generous as to wrong him. Harcourt Wrong him! no man can do’t, he’s beneath an injury: a bubble, a coward, a senseless idiot, a wretch so contemptible to all the world but you, that— Alithea Hold, do not rail at him, for since he is like to be my husband, I am resolved to like him: nay, I think I am obliged to tell him you are not his friend.—Master Sparkish, Master Sparkish! Sparkish What, what?—To Harcourt. Now, dear rogue, has not she wit? Harcourt Not so much as I thought, and hoped she had. Speaks surlily. Alithea Mr. Sparkish, do you bring people to rail at

you? Harcourt Madam— Sparkish How! no; but if he does rail at me, ’tis but in jest, I warrant: what we wits do for one another, and never take any notice of it. Alithea He spoke so scurrilously of you, I had no patience to hear him; besides, he has been making love to me. Harcourt True, damned telltale woman! Aside. Sparkish Pshaw! to show his parts—we wits rail and make love often, but to show our parts: as we have no affections, so we have no malice, we— Alithea He said you were a wretch below an injury— Sparkish Pshaw! Harcourt Damned, senseless, impudent, virtuous jade! Well, since she won’t let me have her, she’ll do as good, she’ll make me hate her. Aside. Alithea A common bubble— Sparkish Pshaw! Alithea A coward— Sparkish Pshaw, pshaw! Alithea A senseless, drivelling idiot— Sparkish How! did he disparage my parts? Nay, then, my honour’s concerned, I can’t put up that, sir, by the world—brother, help me to kill him—Aside. I may draw now, since we have the odds of him:—’tis a good occasion, too, before my mistress—Offers to draw. Alithea Hold, hold! Sparkish What, what? Alithea Aside. I must not let ’em kill the gentleman neither, for his kindness to me: I am so far from hating him, that I wish my gallant had his person and understanding. Nay, if my honour— Sparkish I’ll be thy death. Alithea Hold, hold! Indeed, to tell the truth, the gentleman said after all, that what he spoke was but out of friendship to you. Sparkish How! say, I am, I am a fool, that is, no wit, out of friendship to me? Alithea Yes, to try whether I was concerned enough for you; and made love to me only to be satisfied of my virtue, for your sake. Harcourt Kind, however. Aside. Sparkish Nay, if it were so, my dear rogue, I ask thee pardon; but why would not you tell me so, faith? Harcourt Because I did not think on’t, faith. Sparkish Come, Horner does not come; Harcourt, let’s be gone to the new play.—Come, madam. Alithea I will not go, if you intend to leave me alone in the box, and run into the pit, as you use to do. Sparkish Pshaw! I’ll leave Harcourt with you in the box to entertain you, and that’s as good; if I sat in the box, I should be thought no judge but of trimmings.—Come away, Harcourt, lead her down.

Exeunt Sparkish, Harcourt, and Alithea. Pinchwife Well, go thy ways, for the flower of the true town fops, such as spend their estates before they come to ’em, and are cuckolds before they’re married. But let me go look to my own freehold.—How! Enter Lady Fidget, Mrs. Dainty Fidget, and Mrs. Squeamish. Lady Fidget Your servant, sir: where is your lady? We are come to wait upon her to the new play. Pinchwife New play! Lady Fidget And my husband will wait upon you presently. Pinchwife Aside. Damn your civility.—Aloud. Madam, by no means; I will not see Sir Jasper here, till I have waited upon him at home; nor shall my wife see you till she has waited upon your ladyship at your lodgings. Lady Fidget Now we are here, sir? Pinchwife No, Madam. Mrs. Dainty Pray, let us see her. Mrs. Squeamish We will not stir till we see her. Pinchwife Aside. A pox on you all!—Goes to the door, and returns. She has locked the door, and is gone abroad. Lady Fidget No, you have locked the door, and she’s within. Mrs. Dainty They told us below she was here. Pinchwife Aside. Will nothing do?—Aloud. Well, it must out then. To tell you the truth, ladies, which I was afraid to let you know before, lest it might endanger your lives, my wife has just now the smallpox come out upon her; do not be frightened; but pray be gone, ladies; you shall not stay here in danger of your lives; pray get you gone, ladies. Lady Fidget No, no, we have all had ’em. Mrs. Squeamish Alack, alack! Mrs. Dainty Come, come, we must see how it goes with her; I understand the disease. Lady Fidget Come! Pinchwife Aside. Well, there is no being too hard for women at their own weapon, lying, therefore I’ll quit the field. Exit. Mrs. Squeamish Here’s an example of jealousy! Lady Fidget Indeed, as the world goes, I wonder there are no more jealous, since wives are so neglected. Mrs. Dainty Pshaw! as the world goes, to what end should they be jealous? Lady Fidget Foh! ’tis a nasty world. Mrs. Squeamish That men of parts, great acquaintance, and quality, should take up with and spend themselves and fortunes in keeping little playhouse creatures, foh! Lady Fidget Nay, that women of understanding, great acquaintance, and good quality, should fall a-keeping too of little creatures, foh!

Mrs. Squeamish Why, ’tis the men of quality’s fault; they never visit women of honour and reputation as they used to do; and have not so much as common civility for ladies of our rank, but use us with the same indifferency and ill-breeding as if we were all married to ’em. Lady Fidget She says true; ’tis an arrant shame women of quality should be so slighted; methinks birth—birth should go for something; I have known men admired, courted, and followed for their titles only. Mrs. Squeamish Ay, one would think men of honour should not love, no more than marry, out of their own rank. Mrs. Dainty Fy, fy, upon ’em! they are come to think cross breeding for themselves best, as well as for their dogs and horses. Lady Fidget They are dogs and horses for’t. Mrs. Squeamish One would think, if not for love, for vanity a little. Mrs. Dainty Nay, they do satisfy their vanity upon us sometimes; and are kind to us in their report, tell all the world they lie with us. Lady Fidget Damned rascals, that we should be only wronged by ’em! To report a man has had a person, when he has not had a person, is the greatest wrong in the whole world that can be done to a person. Mrs. Squeamish Well, ’tis an arrant shame noble persons should be so wronged and neglected. Lady Fidget But still ’tis an arranter shame for a noble person to neglect her own honour, and defame her own noble person with little inconsiderable fellows, foh! Mrs. Dainty I suppose the crime against our honour is the same with a man of quality as with another. Lady Fidget How! no sure, the man of quality is likest one’s husband, and therefore the fault should be the less. Mrs. Dainty But then the pleasure should be the less. Lady Fidget Fy, fy, fy, for shame, sister! whither shall we ramble? Be continent in your discourse, or I shall hate you. Mrs. Dainty Besides, an intrigue is so much the more notorious for the man’s quality. Mrs. Squeamish ’Tis true that nobody takes notice of a private man, and therefore with him ’tis more secret; and the crime’s the less when ’tis not known. Lady Fidget You say true; i’faith, I think you are in the right on’t: ’tis not an injury to a husband, till it be an injury to our honours; so that a woman of honour loses no honour with a private person; and to say truth— Mrs. Dainty So, the little fellow is

grown a private person—with her—Apart to Mrs. Squeamish. Lady Fidget But still my dear, dear honour— Enter Sir Jasper Fidget, Horner, and Dorilant. Sir Jasper Ay, my dear, dear of honour, thou hast still so much honour in thy mouth— Horner That she has none elsewhere. Aside. Lady Fidget Oh, what d'ye mean to bring in these upon us? Mrs. Dainty Foh! these are as bad as wits. Mrs. Squeamish Foh! Lady Fidget Let us leave the room. Sir Jasper Stay, stay; faith, to tell you the naked truth— Lady Fidget Fy, Sir Jasper! do not use that word naked. Sir Jasper Well, well, in short I have business at Whitehall, and cannot go to the play with you, therefore would have you go— Lady Fidget With those two to a play? Sir Jasper No, not with t'other, but with Mr. Horner; there can be no more scandal to go with him than with Mr. Tattle, or Master Limberham. Lady Fidget With that nasty fellow! no—no. Sir Jasper Nay, prithee, dear, hear me. Whispers to Lady Fidget. Horner Ladies—Horner and Dorilant draw near Mrs. Squeamish and Mrs. Dainty Fidget. Mrs. Dainty Stand off. Mrs. Squeamish Do not approach us. Mrs. Dainty You herd with the wits, you are obscenity all over. Mrs. Squeamish And I would as soon look upon a picture of Adam and Eve, without fig-leaves, as any of you, if I could help it; therefore keep off, and do not make us sick. Dorilant What a devil are these? Horner Why, these are pretenders to honour, as critics to wit, only by censuring others; and as every raw, peevish, out-of-humoured, affected, dull, tea-drinking, arithmetical fop, sets up for a wit by railing at men of sense, so these for honour, by railing at the court, and ladies of as great honour as quality. Sir Jasper Come, Mr. Horner, I must desire you to go with these ladies to the play, sir. Horner I, sir? Sir Jasper Ay, ay, come, sir. Horner I must beg your pardon, sir, and theirs; I will not be seen in women's company in public again for the world. Sir Jasper Ha, ha, strange aversion! Mrs. Squeamish No, he's for women's company in private. Sir Jasper He—poor man—he—ha! ha! ha! Mrs. Dainty 'Tis a greater shame amongst lewd fellows to be seen in virtuous women's company, than for the women to be seen with them. Horner Indeed, madam, the time was I only hated virtuous women, but now I hate

the other too; I beg your pardon, ladies. Lady Fidget You are very obliging, sir, because we would not be troubled with you. Sir Jasper In sober sadness, he shall go. Dorilant Nay, if he wo' not, I am ready to wait upon the ladies, and I think I am the fitter man. Sir Jasper You sir! no, I thank you for that. Master Horner is a privileged man amongst the virtuous ladies, 'twill be a great while before you are so; he! he! he! he's my wife's gallant; he! he! he! No, pray withdraw, sir, for as I take it, the virtuous ladies have no business with you. Dorilant And I am sure he can have none with them. 'Tis strange a man can't come amongst virtuous women now, but upon the same terms as men are admitted into the Great Turk's seraglio. But heavens keep me from being an ombre player with 'em!—But where is Pinchwife? Exit. Sir Jasper Come, come, man; what, avoid the sweet society of womankind? that sweet, soft, gentle, tame, noble creature, woman, made for man's companion— Horner So is that soft, gentle, tame, and more noble creature a spaniel, and has all their tricks; can fawn, lie down, suffer beating, and fawn the more; barks at your friends when they come to see you, makes your bed hard, gives you fleas, and the mange sometimes. And all the difference is, the spaniel's the more faithful animal, and fawns but upon one master. Sir Jasper He! he! he! Mrs. Squeamish O the rude beast! Mrs. Dainty Insolent brute! Lady Fidget Brute! stinking, mortified, rotten French wether, to dare— Sir Jasper Hold, an't please your ladyship.—For shame, Master Horner! your mother was a woman—Aside. Now shall I never reconcile 'em.—Aside to Lady Fidget. Hark you, madam, take my advice in your anger. You know you often want one to make up your drolling pack of ombre players, and you may cheat him easily; for he's an ill gamester, and consequently loves play. Besides, you know you have but two old civil gentlemen (with stinking breaths too) to wait upon you abroad; take in the third into your service. The other are but crazy; and a lady should have a supernumerary gentleman-usher as a supernumerary coach-horse, lest sometimes you should be forced to stay at home. Lady Fidget But are you sure he loves play, and has money? Sir Jasper He loves play as much as you,

and has money as much as I. Lady Fidget Then I am contented to make him pay for his scurrility. Money makes up in a measure all other wants in men.—Those whom we cannot make hold for gallants, we make fine. Aside. Sir Jasper Aside. So, so; now to mollify, wheedle him.—Aside to Horner. Master Horner, will you never keep civil company? methinks ’tis time now, since you are only fit for them. Come, come, man, you must e’en fall to visiting our wives, eating at our tables, drinking tea with our virtuous relations after dinner, dealing cards to ’em, reading plays and gazettes to ’em, picking fleas out of their smocks for ’em, collecting receipts, new songs, women, pages, and footmen for ’em. Horner I hope they’ll afford me better employment, sir. Sir Jasper He! he! he! ’tis fit you know your work before you come into your place. And since you are unprovided of a lady to flatter, and a good house to eat at, pray frequent mine, and call my wife mistress, and she shall call you gallant, according to the custom. Horner Who, I? Sir Jasper Faith, thou sha’t for my sake; come, for my sake only. Horner For your sake— Sir Jasper Come, come, here’s a gamester for you; let him be a little familiar sometimes; nay, what if a little rude? Gamesters may be rude with ladies, you know. Lady Fidget Yes; losing gamesters have a privilege with women. Horner I always thought the contrary, that the winning gamester had most privilege with women; for when you have lost your money to a man, you’ll lose anything you have, all you have, they say, and he may use you as he pleases. Sir Jasper He! he! he! well, win or lose, you shall have your liberty with her. Lady Fidget As he behaves himself; and for your sake I’ll give him admittance and freedom. Horner All sorts of freedom, madam? Sir Jasper Ay, ay, ay, all sorts of freedom thou canst take. And so go to her, begin thy new employment; wheedle her, jest with her, and be better acquainted one with another. Horner Aside. I think I know her already; therefore may venture with her my secret for hers. Horner and Lady Fidget whisper. Sir Jasper Sister cuz, I have provided an innocent playfellow for you there. Mrs. Dainty Who, he? Mrs. Squeamish There’s a playfellow, indeed! Sir Jasper Yes sure.—What, he is good

enough to play at cards, blindman's-buff, or the fool with, sometimes! Mrs. Squeamish Foh! we'll have no such playfellows. Mrs. Dainty No, sir; you shan't choose playfellows for us, we thank you. Sir Jasper Nay, pray hear me. Whispering to them. Lady Fidget But, poor gentleman, could you be so generous, so truly a man of honour, as for the sakes of us women of honour, to cause yourself to be reported no man? No man! and to suffer yourself the greatest shame that could fall upon a man, that none might fall upon us women by your conversation? but, indeed, sir, as perfectly, perfectly the same man as before your going into France, sir? as perfectly, perfectly, sir? Horner As perfectly, perfectly, madam. Nay, I scorn you should take my word; I desire to be tried only, madam. Lady Fidget Well, that's spoken again like a man of honour: all men of honour desire to come to the test. But, indeed, generally you men report such things of yourselves, one does not know how or whom to believe; and it is come to that pass, we dare not take your words no more than your tailor's, without some staid servant of yours be bound with you. But I have so strong a faith in your honour, dear, dear, noble sir, that I'd forfeit mine for yours, at any time, dear sir. Horner No, madam, you should not need to forfeit it for me; I have given you security already to save you harmless, my late reputation being so well known in the world, madam. Lady Fidget But if upon any future falling-out, or upon a suspicion of my taking the trust out of your hands, to employ some other, you yourself should betray your trust, dear sir? I mean, if you'll give me leave to speak obscenely, you might tell, dear sir. Horner If I did, nobody would believe me. The reputation of impotency is as hardly recovered again in the world as that of cowardice, dear madam. Lady Fidget Nay, then, as one may say, you may do your worst, dear, dear sir. Sir Jasper Come, is your ladyship reconciled to him yet? have you agreed on matters? for I must be gone to Whitehall. Lady Fidget Why, indeed, Sir Jasper, Master Horner is a thousand, thousand times a better man than I thought him. Cousin Squeamish, sister Dainty, I can name him now. Truly, not long ago, you know, I thought his very name obscenity; and I would as soon have lain with him as

have named him. Sir Jasper Very likely, poor madam. Mrs. Dainty I believe it. Mrs. Squeamish No doubt on’t. Sir Jasper Well, well—that your ladyship is as virtuous as any she, I know, and him all the town knows—he! he! he! therefore now you like him, get you gone to your business together, go, go to your business, I say, pleasure, whilst I go to my pleasure, business. Lady Fidget Come, then, dear gallant. Horner Come away, my dearest mistress. Sir Jasper So, so; why, ’tis as I’d have it. Exit. Horner And as I’d have it. Lady Fidget

Who for his business from his wife will run, Takes the best care to have her business done.

Act III

Scene I

A room in Pinchwife’s house.

Enter Alithea and Mrs. Pinchwife. Alithea Sister, what ails you? you are grown melancholy. Mrs. Pinchwife Would it not make anyone melancholy to see you go every day fluttering about abroad, whilst I must stay at home like a poor lonely sullen bird in a cage? Alithea Ay, sister; but you came young, and just from the nest to your cage: so that I thought you liked it, and could be as cheerful in’t as others that took their flight themselves early, and are hopping abroad in the open air. Mrs. Pinchwife Nay, I confess I was quiet enough till my husband told me what pure lives the London ladies live abroad, with their dancing, meetings, and junketings, and dressed every day in their best gowns; and I warrant you, play at ninepins every day of the week, so they do. Enter Pinchwife. Pinchwife Come, what’s here to do? you are putting the town-pleasures in her head, and setting her a-longing. Alithea Yes, after ninepins. You suffer none to give her those longings you mean but yourself. Pinchwife I tell her of the vanities of the town like a confessor. Alithea A confessor!

just such a confessor as he that, by forbidding a silly ostler to grease the horse's teeth, taught him to do't. Pinchwife Come, Mrs. Flippant, good precepts are lost when bad examples are still before us: the liberty you take abroad makes her hanker after it, and out of humour at home. Poor wretch! she desired not to come to London; I would bring her. Alithea Very well. Pinchwife She has been this week in town, and never desired till this afternoon to go abroad. Alithea Was she not at a play yesterday? Pinchwife Yes; but she ne'er asked me; I was myself the cause of her going. Alithea Then if she ask you again, you are the cause of her asking, and not my example. Pinchwife Well, tomorrow night I shall be rid of you; and the next day, before 'tis light, she and I'll be rid of the town, and my dreadful apprehensions.—Come, be not melancholy; for thou sha't go into the country after tomorrow, dearest. Alithea Great comfort! Mrs. Pinchwife Pish! what d'ye tell me of the country for? Pinchwife How's this! what, pish at the country? Mrs. Pinchwife Let me alone; I am not well. Pinchwife O, if that be all—what ails my dearest? Mrs. Pinchwife Truly, I don't know: but I have not been well since you told me there was a gallant at the play in love with me. Pinchwife Ha!— Alithea That's by my example too! Pinchwife Nay, if you are not well, but are so concerned, because a lewd fellow chanced to lie, and say he liked you, you'll make me sick too. Mrs. Pinchwife Of what sickness? Pinchwife O, of that which is worse than the plague, jealousy. Mrs. Pinchwife Pish, you jeer! I'm sure there's no such disease in our receipt-book at home. Pinchwife No, thou never met'st with it, poor innocent.—Well, if thou cuckold me, 'twill be my own fault—for cuckolds and bastards are generally makers of their own fortune. Aside. Mrs. Pinchwife Well, but pray, bud, let's go to a play tonight. Pinchwife 'Tis just done, she comes from it. But why are you so eager to see a play? Mrs. Pinchwife Faith, dear, not that I care one pin for their talk there; but I like to look upon the playermen, and would see, if I could, the gallant you say loves me: that's all, dear bud. Pinchwife Is that all, dear bud? Alithea This proceeds from my example! Mrs. Pinchwife But if the play be

done, let's go abroad, however, dear bud. Pinchwife Come have a little patience and thou shalt go into the country on Friday. Mrs. Pinchwife Therefore I would see first some sights to tell my neighbours of. Nay, I will go abroad, that's once. Alithea I'm the cause of this desire too! Pinchwife But now I think on't, who, who was the cause of Horner's coming to my lodgings today? That was you. Alithea No, you, because you would not let him see your handsome wife out of your lodging. Mrs. Pinchwife Why, O Lord! did the gentleman come hither to see me indeed? Pinchwife No, no.—You are not the cause of that damned question too, Mistress Alithea?—Aside. Well, she's in the right of it. He is in love with my wife—and comes after her—'tis so—but I'll nip his love in the bud; lest he should follow us into the country, and break his chariot-wheel near our house, on purpose for an excuse to come to't. But I think I know the town. Mrs. Pinchwife Come, pray, bud, let's go abroad before 'tis late; for I will go, that's flat and plain. Pinchwife Aside. So! the obstinacy already of the town-wife; and I must, whilst she's here, humour her like one.—Aloud. Sister, how shall we do, that she may not be seen, or known? Alithea Let her put on her mask. Pinchwife Pshaw! a mask makes people but the more inquisitive, and is as ridiculous a disguise as a stage-beard: her shape, stature, habit will be known. And if we should meet with Horner, he would be sure to take acquaintance with us, must wish her joy, kiss her, talk to her, leer upon her, and the devil and all. No, I'll not use her to a mask, 'tis dangerous; for masks have made more cuckolds than the best faces that ever were known. Alithea How will you do then? Mrs. Pinchwife Nay, shall we go? The Exchange will be shut, and I have a mind to see that. Pinchwife So—I have it—I'll dress her up in the suit we are to carry down to her brother, little Sir James; nay, I understand the town-tricks. Come, let's go dress her. A mask! no—a woman masked, like a covered dish, gives a man curiosity and appetite; when, it may be, uncovered, 'twould turn his stomach: no, no. Alithea Indeed your comparison is something a greasy one: but I had a gentle gallant used to say, A beauty masked, like the sun in eclipse, gathers together more gazers

than if it shined out. Exeunt.

Scene II

The New Exchange.

Enter Horner, Harcourt, and Dorilant. Dorilant Engaged to women, and not sup with us! Horner Ay, a pox on ’em all! Harcourt You were much a more reasonable man in the morning, and had as noble resolutions against ’em, as a widower of a week’s liberty. Dorilant Did I ever think to see you keep company with women in vain? Horner In vain: no—’tis since I can’t love ’em, to be revenged on ’em. Harcourt Now your sting is gone, you looked in the box amongst all those women like a drone in the hive; all upon you, shoved and ill-used by ’em all, and thrust from one side to t’other. Dorilant Yet he must be buzzing amongst ’em still, like other beetle-headed liquorish drones. Avoid ’em, and hate ’em, as they hate you. Horner Because I do hate ’em, and would hate ’em yet more, I’ll frequent ’em. You may see by marriage, nothing makes a man hate a woman more than her constant conversation. In short, I converse with ’em, as you do with rich fools, to laugh at ’em and use ’em ill. Dorilant But I would no more sup with women, unless I could lie with ’em, than sup with a rich coxcomb, unless I could cheat him. Horner Yes, I have known thee sup with a fool for his drinking; if he could set out your hand that way only, you were satisfied, and if he were a wine-swallowing mouth, ’twas enough. Harcourt Yes, a man drinks often with a fool, as he tosses with a marker, only to keep his hand in use. But do the ladies drink? Horner Yes, sir; and I shall have the pleasure at least of laying ’em flat with a bottle, and bring as much scandal that way upon ’em as formerly t’other. Harcourt Perhaps you may prove as weak a brother among ’em that way as t’other. Dorilant Foh! drinking with women is as unnatural as scolding with ’em. But ’tis a pleasure of decayed fornicators, and the basest way of quenching love. Harcourt Nay, ’tis drowning love, instead of quenching it. But leave us for civil women too! Dorilant Ay, when he can’t be the better for ’em. We hardly

pardon a man that leaves his friend for a wench, and that's a pretty lawful call. Horner Faith, I would not leave you for 'em, if they would not drink. Dorilant Who would disappoint his company at Lewis's for a gossiping? Harcourt Foh! Wine and women, good apart, together are as nauseous as sack and sugar. But hark you, sir, before you go, a little of your advice; an old maimed general, when unfit for action, is fittest for counsel. I have other designs upon women than eating and drinking with them; I am in love with Sparkish's mistress, whom he is to marry tomorrow: now how shall I get her? Enter Sparkish, looking about. Horner Why, here comes one will help you to her. Harcourt He! he, I tell you, is my rival, and will hinder my love. Horner No; a foolish rival and a jealous husband assist their rival's designs; for they are sure to make their women hate them, which is the first step to their love for another man. Harcourt But I cannot come near his mistress but in his company. Horner Still the better for you; for fools are most easily cheated when they themselves are accessories: and he is to be bubbled of his mistress as of his money, the common mistress, by keeping him company. Sparkish Who is that that is to be bubbled? Faith, let me snack; I han't met with a bubble since Christmas. 'Gad, I think bubbles are like their brother woodcocks, go out with the cold weather. Harcourt A pox! he did not hear all, I hope. Apart to Horner. Sparkish Come, you bubbling rogues you, where do we sup?—Oh, Harcourt, my mistress tells me you have been making fierce love to her all the play long: ha! ha!—But I— Harcourt I make love to her! Sparkish Nay, I forgive thee, for I think I know thee, and I know her; but I am sure I know myself. Harcourt Did she tell you so? I see all women are like these of the Exchange; who, to enhance the prize of their commodities, report to their fond customers offers which were never made 'em. Horner Ay, women are apt to tell before the intrigue, as men after it, and so show themselves the vainer sex. But hast thou a mistress, Sparkish? 'Tis as hard for me to believe it, as that thou ever hadst a bubble, as you bragged just now. Sparkish O, your servant, sir: are you at your raillery, sir? But we are some of us beforehand with you today at the play. The

wits were something bold with you, sir; did you not hear us laugh? Horner Yes; but I thought you had gone to plays, to laugh at the poet's wit, not at your own. Sparkish Your servant, sir: no, I thank you. 'Gad I go to a play as to a country treat; I carry my own wine to one, and my own wit to t'other, or else I'm sure I should not be merry at either. And the reason why we are so often louder than the players, is, because we think we speak more wit, and so become the poet's rivals in his audience: for to tell you the truth, we hate the silly rogues; nay, so much, that we find fault even with their bawdy upon the stage, whilst we talk nothing else in the pit as loud. Horner But why shouldst thou hate the silly poets? Thou hast too much wit to be one; and they, like whores, are only hated by each other: and thou dost scorn writing, I'm sure. Sparkish Yes; I'd have you to know I scorn writing: but women, women, that make men do all foolish things, make 'em write songs too. Everybody does it. 'Tis even as common with lovers, as playing with fans; and you can no more help rhyming to your Phillis, than drinking to your Phillis. Harcourt Nay, poetry in love is no more to be avoided than jealousy. Dorilant But the poets damned your songs, did they? Sparkish Damn the poets! they have turned 'em into burlesque, as they call it. That burlesque is a hocus-pocus trick they have got, which, by the virtue of Hictius doctius topsy turvy, they make a wise and witty man in the world, a fool upon the stage you know not how: and 'tis therefore I hate 'em too, for I know not but it may be my own case; for they'll put a man into a play for looking asquint. Their predecessors were contented to make serving-men only their stage-fools: but these rogues must have gentlemen, with a pox to 'em, nay, knights; and, indeed, you shall hardly see a fool upon the stage but he's a knight. And to tell you the truth, they have kept me these six years from being a knight in earnest, for fear of being knighted in a play, and dubbed a fool. Dorilant Blame 'em not, they must follow their copy, the age. Harcourt But why shouldst thou be afraid of being in a play, who expose yourself every day in the playhouses, and at public places? Horner 'Tis but being on the stage, instead of standing on a bench in the pit. Dorilant Don't you give

money to painters to draw you like? and are you afraid of your pictures at length in a playhouse, where all your mistresses may see you? Sparkish A pox! painters don't draw the smallpox or pimples in one's face. Come, damn all your silly authors whatever, all books and booksellers, by the world; and all readers, courteous or uncourteous! Harcourt But who comes here, Sparkish? Enter Pinchwife and Mrs. Pinchwife in man's clothes, Alithea and Lucy. Sparkish Oh, hide me! There's my mistress too. Sparkish hides himself behind Harcourt. Harcourt She sees you. Sparkish But I will not see her. 'Tis time to go to Whitehall, and I must not fail the drawing-room. Harcourt Pray, first carry me, and reconcile me to her. Sparkish Another time. Faith, the king will have supped. Harcourt Not with the worse stomach for thy absence. Thou art one of those fools that think their attendance at the king's meals as necessary as his physicians, when you are more troublesome to him than his doctors or his dogs. Sparkish Pshaw! I know my interest, sir. Prithee hide me. Horner Your servant, Pinchwife.—What, he knows us not! Pinchwife Come along. To his Wife aside. Mrs. Pinchwife Pray, have you any ballads? give me sixpenny worth. Bookseller We have no ballads. Mrs. Pinchwife Then give me Covent Garden Drollery, and a play or two—Oh, here's Tarugo's Wiles, and The Slighted Maiden;7 I'll have them. Pinchwife No; plays are not for your reading. Come along; will you discover yourself? Apart to her. Horner Who is that pretty youth with him, Sparkish? Sparkish I believe his wife's brother, because he's something like her: but I never saw her but once. Horner Extremely handsome; I have seen a face like it too. Let us follow 'em. Exeunt Pinchwife, Mrs. Pinchwife, Pinchwife, Alithea, and Lucy; Horner and Dorilant following them. Harcourt Come, Sparkish, your mistress saw you, and will be angry you go not to her. Besides, I would fain be reconciled to her, which none but you can do, dear friend. Sparkish Well, that's a better reason, dear friend. I would not go near her now for hers or my own sake; but I can deny you nothing: for though I have known thee a great while, never go, if I do not love thee as well as a new acquaintance. Harcourt I am obliged

to you indeed, dear friend. I would be well with her, only to be well with thee still; for these ties to wives usually dissolve all ties to friends. I would be contented she should enjoy you a-nights, but I would have you to myself a-days as I have had, dear friend. Sparkish And thou shalt enjoy me a-days, dear, dear friend, never stir: and I'll be divorced from her, sooner than from thee. Come along. Harcourt Aside. So, we are hard put to't, when we make our rival our procurer; but neither she nor her brother would let me come near her now. When all's done, a rival is the best cloak to steal to a mistress under, without suspicion; and when we have once got to her as we desire, we throw him off like other cloaks. Exit Sparkish, Harcourt following him. Reenter Pinchwife and Mrs. Pinchwife. Pinchwife To Alithea. Sister, if you will not go, we must leave you.—Aside. The fool her gallant and she will muster up all the young saunterers of this place, and they will leave their dear sempstresses to follow us. What a swarm of cuckolds and cuckold-makers are here!—Come, let's be gone, Mistress Margery. Mrs. Pinchwife Don't you believe that; I han't half my bellyfull of sights yet. Pinchwife Then walk this way. Mrs. Pinchwife Lord, what a power of brave signs are here! stay—the Bull's-Head, the Ram's-Head, and the Stag's-Head, dear— Pinchwife Nay, if every husband's proper sign here were visible, they would be all alike. Mrs. Pinchwife What d'ye mean by that, bud? Pinchwife 'Tis no matter—no matter, bud. Mrs. Pinchwife Pray tell me: nay, I will know. Pinchwife They would be all Bulls, Stags, and Rams-heads. Exeunt Pinchwife and Mrs. Pinchwife. Reenter Sparkish, Harcourt, Alithea, and Lucy, at the other side. Sparkish Come, dear madam, for my sake you shall be reconciled to him. Alithea For your sake I hate him. Harcourt That's something too cruel, madam, to hate me for his sake. Sparkish Ay indeed, madam, too, too cruel to me, to hate my friend for my sake. Alithea I hate him because he is your enemy; and you ought to hate him too, for making love to me, if you love me. Sparkish That's a good one! I hate a man for loving you! If he did love you, 'tis but what he can't help; and 'tis your fault, not his, if he admires you. I hate a man for being of my opinion! I'll n'er

do’t, by the world. Alithea Is it for your honour, or mine, to suffer a man to make love to me, who am to marry you tomorrow? Sparkish Is it for your honour, or mine, to have me jealous? That he makes love to you, is a sign you are handsome; and that I am not jealous, is a sign you are virtuous. That I think is for your honour. Alithea But ’tis your honour too I am concerned for. Harcourt But why, dearest madam, will you be more concerned for his honour than he is himself? Let his honour alone, for my sake and his. He! he has no honour— Sparkish How’s that? Harcourt But what my dear friend can guard himself. Sparkish O ho—that’s right again. Harcourt Your care of his honour argues his neglect of it, which is no honour to my dear friend here. Therefore once more, let his honour go which way it will, dear madam. Sparkish Ay, ay; were it for my honour to marry a woman whose virtue I suspected, and could not trust her in a friend’s hands? Alithea Are you not afraid to lose me? Harcourt He afraid to lose you, madam! No, no—you may see how the most estimable and most glorious creature in the world is valued by him. Will you not see it? Sparkish Right, honest Frank, I have that noble value for her that I cannot be jealous of her. Alithea You mistake him. He means, you care not for me, nor who has me. Sparkish Lord, madam, I see you are jealous! Will you wrest a poor man’s meaning from his words? Alithea You astonish me, sir, with your want of jealousy. Sparkish And you make me giddy, madam, with your jealousy and fears, and virtue and honour. ’Gad, I see virtue makes a woman as troublesome as a little reading or learning. Alithea Monstrous! Lucy Well, to see what easy husbands these women of quality can meet with! a poor chambermaid can never have such ladylike luck. Besides, he’s thrown away upon her. She’ll make no use of her fortune, her blessing, none to a gentleman, for a pure cuckold; for it requires good breeding to be a cuckold. Aside. Alithea I tell you then plainly, he pursues me to marry me. Sparkish Pshaw! Harcourt Come, madam, you see you strive in vain to make him jealous of me. My dear friend is the kindest creature in the world to me. Sparkish Poor fellow! Harcourt But his kindness only is not enough for me, without your favour, your

good opinion, dear madam: ’tis that must perfect my happiness. Good gentleman, he believes all I say: would you would do so! Jealous of me! I would not wrong him nor you for the world. Sparkish Look you there. Hear him, hear him, and do not walk away so. Alithea walks carelessly to and fro. Harcourt I love you, madam, so— Sparkish How’s that? Nay, now you begin to go too far indeed. Harcourt So much, I confess, I say, I love you, that I would not have you miserable, and cast yourself away upon so unworthy and inconsiderable a thing as what you see here. Clapping his hand on his breast, points at Sparkish. Sparkish No, faith, I believe thou wouldst not: now his meaning is plain; but I knew before thou wouldst not wrong me, nor her. Harcourt No, no, Heavens forbid the glory of her sex should fall so low, as into the embraces of such a contemptible wretch, the least of mankind—my friend here—I injure him! Embracing Sparkish. Alithea Very well. Sparkish No, no, dear friend, I knew it.—Madam, you see he will rather wrong himself than me, in giving himself such names. Alithea Do not you understand him yet? Sparkish Yes: how modestly he speaks of himself, poor fellow! Alithea Methinks he speaks impudently of yourself, since—before yourself too; insomuch that I can no longer suffer his scurrilous abusiveness to you, no more than his love to me. Offers to go. Sparkish Nay, nay, madam, pray stay—his love to you! Lord, madam, has he not spoke yet plain enough? Alithea Yes, indeed, I should think so. Sparkish Well then, by the world, a man can’t speak civilly to a woman now, but presently she says, he makes love to her. Nay, madam, you shall stay, with your pardon, since you have not yet understood him, till he has made an éclaircissement of his love to you, that is, what kind of love it is. Answer to thy catechism, friend; do you love my mistress here? Harcourt Yes, I wish she would not doubt it. Sparkish But how do you love her? Harcourt With all my soul. Alithea I thank him, methinks he speaks plain enough now. Sparkish To Alithea. You are out still.—But with what kind of love, Harcourt? Harcourt With the best and the truest love in the world. Sparkish Look you there then, that is with no matrimonial love,

I’m sure. Alithea How’s that? do you say matrimonial love is not best? Sparkish ’Gad, I went too far ere I was aware. But speak for thyself, Harcourt, you said you would not wrong me nor her. Harcourt No, so, madam, e’en take him for Heaven’s sake. Sparkish Look you there, madam. Harcourt Who should in all justice be yours, he that loves you most. Claps his hand on his breast. Alithea Look you there, Mr. Sparkish, who’s that? Sparkish Who should it be?—Go on, Harcourt. Harcourt Who loves you more than women titles, or fortune fools. Points at Sparkish. Sparkish Look you there, he means me still, for he points at me. Alithea Ridiculous! Harcourt Who can only match your faith and constancy in love. Sparkish Ay. Harcourt Who knows, if it be possible, how to value so much beauty and virtue. Sparkish Ay. Harcourt Whose love can no more be equalled in the world, than that heavenly form of yours. Sparkish No. Harcourt Who could no more suffer a rival, than your absence, and yet could no more suspect your virtue, than his own constancy in his love to you. Sparkish No. Harcourt Who, in fine, loves you better than his eyes, that first made him love you. Sparkish Ay—Nay, madam, faith, you shan’t go till— Alithea Have a care, lest you make me stay too long. Sparkish But till he has saluted you; that I may be assured you are friends, after his honest advice and declaration. Come, pray, madam, be friends with him. Reenter Pinchwife and Mrs. Pinchwife. Alithea You must pardon me, sir, that I am not yet so obedient to you. Pinchwife What, invite your wife to kiss men? Monstrous! are you not ashamed? I will never forgive you. Sparkish Are you not ashamed, that I should have more confidence in the chastity of your family than you have? You must not teach me, I am a man of honour, sir, though I am frank and free; I am frank, sir— Pinchwife Very frank, sir, to share your wife with your friends. Sparkish He is an humble, menial friend, such as reconciles the differences of the marriage bed; you know man and wife do not always agree; I design him for that use, therefore would have him well with my wife. Pinchwife A menial friend!—you will get a great many menial friends, by showing your wife as you do. Sparkish What then? It may

be I have a pleasure in't, as I have to show fine clothes at a playhouse, the first day, and count money before poor rogues. Pinchwife He that shows his wife or money, will be in danger of having them borrowed sometimes. Sparkish I love to be envied, and would not marry a wife that I alone could love; loving alone is as dull as eating alone. Is it not a frank age? and I am a frank person; and to tell you the truth, it may be, I love to have rivals in a wife, they make her seem to a man still but as a kept mistress; and so good night, for I must to Whitehall.—Madam, I hope you are now reconciled to my friend; and so I wish you a good night, madam, and sleep if you can: for tomorrow you know I must visit you early with a canonical gentleman. Good night, dear Harcourt. Exit. Harcourt Madam, I hope you will not refuse my visit tomorrow, if it should be earlier with a canonical gentleman than Mr. Sparkish's. Pinchwife This gentlewoman is yet under my care, therefore you must yet forbear your freedom with her, sir. Coming between Alithea and Harcourt. Harcourt Must, sir? Pinchwife Yes, sir, she is my sister. Harcourt 'Tis well she is, sir—for I must be her servant, sir.—Madam— Pinchwife Come away, sister, we had been gone, if it had not been for you, and so avoided these lewd rake-hells, who seem to haunt us. Reenter Horner and Dorilant. Horner How now, Pinchwife! Pinchwife Your servant. Horner What! I see a little time in the country makes a man turn wild and unsociable, and only fit to converse with his horses, dogs, and his herds. Pinchwife I have business, sir, and must mind it; your business is pleasure, therefore you and I must go different ways. Horner Well, you may go on, but this pretty young gentleman—Takes hold of Mrs. Pinchwife. Harcourt The lady— Dorilant And the maid— Horner Shall stay with us; for I suppose their business is the same with ours, pleasure. Pinchwife 'Sdeath, he knows her, she carries it so sillily! yet if he does not, I should be more silly to discover it first. Aside. Alithea Pray, let us go, sir. Pinchwife Come, come— Horner To Mrs. Pinchwife. Had you not rather stay with us?—Prithee, Pinchwife, who is this pretty young gentleman? Pinchwife One to whom I'm a guardian.—Aside. I wish I could keep her out of

your hands. Horner Who is he? I never saw anything so pretty in all my life. Pinchwife Pshaw! do not look upon him so much, he's a poor bashful youth, you'll put him out of countenance.—Come away, brother. Offers to take her away. Horner O, your brother! Pinchwife Yes, my wife's brother.—Come, come, she'll stay supper for us. Horner I thought so, for he is very like her I saw you at the play with, whom I told you I was in love with. Mrs. Pinchwife Aside. O jeminy! is that he that was in love with me? I am glad on't, I vow, for he's a curious fine gentleman, and I love him already, too.—To Pinchwife. Is this he, bud? Pinchwife Come away, come away. To his Wife. Horner Why, what haste are you in? why won't you let me talk with him? Pinchwife Because you'll debauch him; he's yet young and innocent, and I would not have him debauched for anything in the world.—Aside. How she gazes on him! the devil! Horner Harcourt, Dorilant, look you here, this is the likeness of that dowdy he told us of, his wife; did you ever see a lovelier creature? The rogue has reason to be jealous of his wife, since she is like him, for she would make all that see her in love with her. Harcourt And, as I remember now, she is as like him here as can be. Dorilant She is indeed very pretty, if she be like him. Horner Very pretty? a very pretty commendation!—she is a glorious creature, beautiful beyond all things I ever beheld. Pinchwife So, so. Harcourt More beautiful than a poet's first mistress of imagination. Horner Or another man's last mistress of flesh and blood. Mrs. Pinchwife Nay, now you jeer, sir; pray don't jeer me. Pinchwife Come, come.—Aside. By Heavens, she'll discover herself! Horner I speak of your sister, sir. Pinchwife Ay, but saying she was handsome, if like him, made him blush.—Aside. I am upon a rack! Horner Methinks he is so handsome he should not be a man. Pinchwife Aside. O, there 'tis out! he has discovered her! I am not able to suffer any longer.—To his Wife. Come, come away, I say. Horner Nay, by your leave, sir, he shall not go yet.—Aside to them. Harcourt, Dorilant, let us torment this jealous rogue a little. Harcourt and Dorilant How? Horner I'll show you. Pinchwife Come, pray let him

go, I cannot stay fooling any longer; I tell you his sister stays supper for us. Horner Does she? Come then, we'll all go to sup with he and thee. Pinchwife No, now I think on't, having stayed so long for us, I warrant she's gone to bed.—Aside. I wish she and I were well out of their hands.—To his Wife. Come, I must rise early tomorrow, come. Horner Well then, if she be gone to bed, I wish her and you a good night. But pray, young gentleman, present my humble service to her. Mrs. Pinchwife Thank you heartily, sir. Pinchwife Aside. 'Sdeath, she will discover herself yet in spite of me—Aloud. He is something more civil to you, for your kindness to his sister, than I am, it seems. Horner Tell her, dear sweet little gentleman, for all your brother there, that you have revived the love I had for her at first sight in the playhouse. Mrs. Pinchwife But did you love her indeed, and indeed? Pinchwife Aside. So, so.—Aloud. Away, I say. Horner Nay, stay.—Yes, indeed, and indeed, pray do you tell her so, and give her this kiss from me. Kisses her. Pinchwife Aside. O Heavens! what do I suffer? Now 'tis too plain he knows her, and yet— Horner And this, and this—Kisses her again. Mrs. Pinchwife What do you kiss me for? I am no woman. Pinchwife Aside. So, there, 'tis out.—Aloud. Come, I cannot, nor will stay any longer. Horner Nay, they shall send your lady a kiss too. Here, Harcourt, Dorilant, will you not? They kiss her. Pinchwife Aside. How! do I suffer this? Was I not accusing another just now for this rascally patience, in permitting his wife to be kissed before his face? Ten thousand ulcers gnaw away their lips.—Aloud. Come, come. Horner Good night, dear little gentleman; madam, good night: farewell, Pinchwife.—Apart to Harcourt and Dorilant. Did not I tell you I would raise his jealous gall? Exeunt Horner, Harcourt and Dorilant. Pinchwife So, they are gone at last; stay, let me see first if the coach be at this door. Exit. Reenter Horner, Harcourt, and Dorilant. Horner What, not gone yet? Will you be sure to do as I desired you, sweet sir? Mrs. Pinchwife Sweet sir, but what will you give me then? Horner Anything. Come away into the next walk. Exit, haling away Mrs. Pinchwife. Alithea Hold! hold! what d'ye do? Lucy Stay, stay, hold—

Harcourt Hold, madam, hold, let him present him—he'll come presently; nay, I will never let you go till you answer my question. Lucy For God's sake, sir, I must follow 'em. Alithea and Lucy, struggling with Harcourt and Dorilant. Dorilant No, I have something to present you with too, you shan't follow them. Reenter Pinchwife. Pinchwife Where?—how—what's become of?—gone!—whither? Lucy He's only gone with the gentleman, who will give him something, an't please your worship. Pinchwife Something!—give him something, with a pox!—where are they? Alithea In the next walk only, brother. Pinchwife Only, only! where, where? Exit and returns presently, then goes out again. Harcourt What's the matter with him? why so much concerned? But, dearest madam— Alithea Pray let me go, sir; I have said and suffered enough already. Harcourt Then you will not look upon, nor pity, my sufferings? Alithea To look upon 'em, when I cannot help 'em, were cruelty, not pity; therefore, I will never see you more. Harcourt Let me then, madam, have my privilege of a banished lover, complaining or railing, and giving you but a farewell reason why, if you cannot condescend to marry me, you should not take that wretch, my rival. Alithea He only, not you, since my honour is engaged so far to him, can give me a reason why I should not marry him; but if he be true, and what I think him to me, I must be so to him. Your servant, sir. Harcourt Have women only constancy when 'tis a vice, and are, like Fortune, only true to fools? Dorilant Thou sha't not stir, thou robust creature; you see I can deal with you, therefore you should stay the rather, and be kind. To Lucy, who struggles to get from him. Reenter Pinchwife. Pinchwife Gone, gone, not to be found! quite gone! ten thousand plagues go with 'em! Which way went they? Alithea But into t'other walk, brother. Lucy Their business will be done presently sure, an't please your worship; it can't be long in doing, I'm sure on't. Alithea Are they not there? Pinchwife No, you know where they are, you infamous wretch, eternal shame of your family, which you do not dishonour enough yourself you think, but you must help her to do it too, thou legion of bawds! Alithea Good brother— Pinchwife Damned, damned sister! Alithea

Look you here, she's coming. Reenter Mrs. Pinchwife running, with her hat full of oranges and dried fruit under her arm, Horner following. Mrs. Pinchwife O dear bud, look you here what I have got, see! Pinchwife And what I have got here too, which you can't see! Aside, rubbing his forehead. Mrs. Pinchwife The fine gentleman has given me better things yet. Pinchwife Has he so?—Aside. Out of breath and coloured!—I must hold yet. Horner I have only given your little brother an orange, sir. Pinchwife To Horner. Thank you, sir.—Aside. You have only squeezed my orange, I suppose, and given it me again; yet I must have a city patience.—To his Wife. Come, come away. Mrs. Pinchwife Stay, till I have put up my fine things, bud. Enter Sir Jasper Fidget. Sir Jasper O, Master Horner, come, come, the ladies stay for you; your mistress, my wife, wonders you make not more haste to her. Horner I have stayed this half hour for you here, and 'tis your fault I am not now with your wife. Sir Jasper But, pray, don't let her know so much; the truth on't is, I was advancing a certain project to his majesty about—I'll tell you. Horner No, let's go, and hear it at your house. Good night, sweet little gentleman; one kiss more, you'll remember me now, I hope. Kisses her. Dorilant What, Sir Jasper, will you separate friends? He promised to sup with us, and if you take him to your house, you'll be in danger of our company too. Sir Jasper Alas! gentlemen, my house is not fit for you; there are none but civil women there, which are not for your turn. He, you know, can bear with the society of civil women now, ha! ha! ha! besides, he's one of my family—he's—he! he! he! Dorilant What is he? Sir Jasper Faith, my eunuch, since you'll have it; he! he! he! Exeunt Sir Jasper Fidget and Horner. Dorilant I rather wish thou wert his or my cuckold. Harcourt, what a good cuckold is lost there for want of a man to make him one? Thee and I cannot have Horner's privilege, who can make use of it. Harcourt Ay, to poor Horner 'tis like coming to an estate at threescore, when a man can't be the better for't. Pinchwife Come. Mrs. Pinchwife Presently, bud. Dorilant Come, let us go too.—To Alithea. Madam, your servant.—To Lucy. Good night, strapper.

Harcourt Madam, though you will not let me have a good day or night, I wish you one; but dare not name the other half of my wish. Alithea Good night, sir, forever. Mrs. Pinchwife I don't know where to put this here, dear bud, you shall eat it; nay, you shall have part of the fine gentleman's good things, or treat, as you call it, when we come home. Pinchwife

Indeed, I deserve it, since I furnished the best part of it. Strikes away the orange.

The gallant treats presents, and gives the ball; But 'tis the absent cuckold pays for all.

Act IV

Scene I

Pinchwife's house in the morning.

Enter Alithea dressed in new clothes, and Lucy. Lucy Well—madam, now have I dressed you, and set you out with so many ornaments, and spent upon you ounces of essence and pulvillio;8 and all this for no other purpose but as people adorn and perfume a corpse for a stinking secondhand grave: such, or as bad, I think Master Sparkish's bed. Alithea Hold your peace. Lucy Nay, madam, I will ask you the reason why you would banish poor Master Harcourt forever from your sight; how could you be so hard-hearted? Alithea 'Twas because I was not hard-hearted. Lucy No, no; 'twas stark love and kindness, I warrant. Alithea It was so; I would see him no more because I love him. Lucy Hey day, a very pretty reason! Alithea You do not understand me. Lucy I wish you may yourself. Alithea I was engaged to marry, you see, another man, whom my justice will not suffer me to deceive or injure. Lucy Can there be a greater cheat or wrong done to a man than to give him your person without your heart? I should make a conscience of it. Alithea I'll retrieve it for him after I am married a while. Lucy The woman that marries to love better, will be as

much mistaken as the wencher that marries to live better. No, madam, marrying to increase love is like gaming to become rich; alas! you only lose what little stock you had before. Alithea I find by your rhetoric you have been bribed to betray me. Lucy Only by his merit, that has bribed your heart, you see, against your word and rigid honour. But what a devil is this honour! ’tis sure a disease in the head, like the megrim or falling-sickness, that always hurries people away to do themselves mischief. Men lose their lives by it; women, what’s dearer to ’em, their love, the life of life. Alithea Come, pray talk you no more of honour, nor Master Harcourt; I wish the other would come to secure my fidelity to him and his right in me. Lucy You will marry him then? Alithea Certainly, I have given him already my word, and will my hand too, to make it good, when he comes. Lucy Well, I wish I may never stick pin more, if he be not an arrant natural, to t’other fine gentleman. Alithea I own he wants the wit of Harcourt, which I will dispense withal for another want he has, which is want of jealousy, which men of wit seldom want. Lucy Lord, madam, what should you do with a fool to your husband? You intend to be honest, don’t you? then that husbandly virtue, credulity, is thrown away upon you. Alithea He only that could suspect my virtue should have cause to do it; ’tis Sparkish’s confidence in my truth that obliges me to be so faithful to him. Lucy You are not sure his opinion may last. Alithea I am satisfied, ’tis impossible for him to be jealous after the proofs I have had of him. Jealousy in a husband—Heaven defend me from it! it begets a thousand plagues to a poor woman, the loss of her honour, her quiet, and her— Lucy And her pleasure. Alithea What d’ye mean, impertinent? Lucy Liberty is a great pleasure, madam. Alithea I say, loss of her honour, her quiet, nay, her life sometimes; and what’s as bad almost, the loss of this town; that is, she is sent into the country, which is the last ill-usage of a husband to a wife, I think. Lucy Aside. O, does the wind lie there?—Aloud. Then of necessity, madam, you think a man must carry his wife into the country, if he be wise. The country is as terrible, I find, to our young English ladies, as a monastery to those abroad; and on my virginity, I

think they would rather marry a London jailer, than a high sheriff of a county, since neither can stir from his employment. Formerly women of wit married fools for a great estate, a fine seat, or the like; but now ’tis for a pretty seat only in Lincoln’s-Inn-Fields, St. James’s-Fields, or the Pall-Mall. Enter Sparkish, and Harcourt, dressed like a Parson. Sparkish Madam, your humble servant, a happy day to you, and to us all. Harcourt Amen. Alithea Who have we here? Sparkish My chaplain, faith—O madam, poor Harcourt remembers his humble service to you; and, in obedience to your last commands, refrains coming into your sight. Alithea Is not that he? Sparkish No, fy, no; but to show that he ne’er intended to hinder our match, has sent his brother here to join our hands. When I get me a wife, I must get her a chaplain, according to the custom; that is his brother, and my chaplain. Alithea His brother! Lucy And your chaplain, to preach in your pulpit then—Aside. Alithea His brother! Sparkish Nay, I knew you would not believe it.—I told you, sir, she would take you for your brother Frank. Alithea Believe it! Lucy His brother! ha! ha! he! he has a trick left still, it seems. Aside. Sparkish Come, my dearest, pray let us go to church before the canonical hour is past. Alithea For shame, you are abused still. Sparkish By the world, ’tis strange now you are so incredulous. Alithea ’Tis strange you are so credulous. Sparkish Dearest of my life, hear me. I tell you this is Ned Harcourt of Cambridge, by the world; you see he has a sneaking college look. ’Tis true he’s something like his brother Frank; and they differ from each other no more than in their age, for they were twins. Lucy Ha! ha! ha! Alithea Your servant, sir; I cannot be so deceived, though you are. But come, let’s hear, how do you know what you affirm so confidently? Sparkish Why, I’ll tell you all. Frank Harcourt coming to me this morning to wish me joy, and present his service to you, I asked him if he could help me to a parson. Whereupon he told me, he had a brother in town who was in orders; and he went straight away, and sent him, you see there, to me. Alithea Yes, Frank goes and puts on a black coat, then tells you he is Ned; that’s all you have for’t. Sparkish Pshaw! pshaw! I tell you, by the same token, the

midwife put her garter about Frank's neck, to know 'em asunder, they were so like. Alithea Frank tells you this too? Sparkish Ay, and Ned there too: nay, they are both in a story. Alithea So, so; very foolish. Sparkish Lord, if you won't believe one, you had best try him by your chambermaid there; for chambermaids must needs know chaplains from other men, they are so used to 'em. Lucy Let's see: nay, I'll be sworn he has the canonical smirk, and the filthy clammy palm of a chaplain. Alithea Well, most reverend doctor, pray let us make an end of this fooling. Harcourt With all my soul, divine heavenly creature, when you please. Alithea He speaks like a chaplain indeed. Sparkish Why, was there not soul, divine, heavenly, in what he said? Alithea Once more, most impertinent black coat, cease your persecution, and let us have a conclusion of this ridiculous love. Harcourt I had forgot, I must suit my style to my coat, or I wear it in vain. Aside. Alithea I have no more patience left; let us make once an end of this troublesome love, I say. Harcourt So be it, seraphic lady, when your honour shall think it meet and convenient so to do. Sparkish 'Gad I'm sure none but a chaplain could speak so, I think. Alithea Let me tell you, sir, this dull trick will not serve your turn; though you delay our marriage, you shall not hinder it. Harcourt Far be it from me, munificent patroness, to delay your marriage; I desire nothing more than to marry you presently, which I might do, if you yourself would; for my noble, good-natured, and thrice generous patron here would not hinder it. Sparkish No, poor man, not I, faith. Harcourt And now, madam, let me tell you plainly nobody else shall marry you; by Heavens! I'll die first, for I'm sure I should die after it. Lucy How his love has made him forget his function, as I have seen it in real parsons! Alithea That was spoken like a chaplain too? now you understand him, I hope. Sparkish Poor man, he takes it heinously to be refused; I can't blame him, 'tis putting an indignity upon him, not to be suffered; but you'll pardon me, madam, it shan't be; he shall marry us; come away, pray madam. Lucy Ha! ha! he! more ado! 'tis late. Alithea Invincible stupidity! I tell you, he would marry me as your rival, not as your chaplain. Sparkish Come, come, madam. Pulling her away. Lucy I

pray, madam, do not refuse this reverend divine the honour and satisfaction of marrying you; for I dare say, he has set his heart upon't, good doctor. Alithea What can you hope or design by this? Harcourt I could answer her, a reprieve for a day only, often revokes a hasty doom. At worst, if she will not take mercy on me, and let me marry her, I have at least the lover's second pleasure, hindering my rival's enjoyment, though but for a time. Aside. Sparkish Come, madam, 'tis e'en twelve o'clock, and my mother charged me never to be married out of the canonical hours. Come, come; Lord, here's such a deal of modesty, I warrant, the first day. Lucy Yes, an't please your worship, married women show all their modesty the first day, because married men show all their love the first day. Exeunt.

Scene II

A bedchamber in Pinchwife's house.

Pinchwife and Mrs. Pinchwife discovered. Pinchwife Come, tell me, I say. Mrs. Pinchwife Lord! han't I told it a hundred times over? Pinchwife Aside. I would try, if in the repetition of the ungrateful tale, I could find her altering it in the least circumstance; for if her story be false, she is so too.—Aloud. Come, how was't, baggage? Mrs. Pinchwife Lord, what pleasure you take to hear it sure! Pinchwife No, you take more in telling it I find; but speak, how was't? Mrs. Pinchwife He carried me up into the house next to the Exchange. Pinchwife So, and you two were only in the room! Mrs. Pinchwife Yes, for he sent away a youth that was there, for some dried fruit, and China oranges. Pinchwife Did he so? Damn him for it—and for— Mrs. Pinchwife But presently came up the gentlewoman of the house. Pinchwife O, 'twas well she did; but what did he do whilst the fruit came? Mrs. Pinchwife He kissed me a hundred times, and told me he fancied he kissed my fine sister, meaning me, you know, whom he said he loved with all his soul, and bid me be sure to tell her so, and to desire her to be at her window, by eleven of the clock this morning, and he would walk under it at that time. Pinchwife And he was as

good as his word, very punctual; a pox reward him for't. Aside. Mrs. Pinchwife Well, and he said if you were not within, he would come up to her, meaning me, you know, bud, still. Pinchwife Aside. So—he knew her certainly; but for this confession, I am obliged to her simplicity.—Aloud. But what, you stood very still when he kissed you? Mrs. Pinchwife Yes, I warrant you; would you have had me discovered myself? Pinchwife But you told me he did some beastliness to you, as you call it; what was't? Mrs. Pinchwife Why, he put— Pinchwife What? Mrs. Pinchwife Why, he put the tip of his tongue between my lips, and so mousled me—and I said, I'd bite it. Pinchwife An eternal canker seize it, for a dog! Mrs. Pinchwife Nay, you need not be so angry with him neither, for to say truth, he has the sweetest breath I ever knew. Pinchwife The devil! you were satisfied with it then, and would do it again? Mrs. Pinchwife Not unless he should force me. Pinchwife Force you, changeling! I tell you, no woman can be forced. Mrs. Pinchwife Yes, but she may sure, by such a one as he, for he's a proper, goodly, strong man; 'tis hard, let me tell you, to resist him. Pinchwife Aside. So, 'tis plain she loves him, yet she has not love enough to make her conceal it from me; but the sight of him will increase her aversion for me and love for him; and that love instruct her how to deceive me and satisfy him, all idiot as she is. Love! 'twas he gave women first their craft, their art of deluding. Out of Nature's hands they came plain, open, silly, and fit for slaves, as she and Heaven intended 'em; but damned Love—well—I must strangle that little monster whilst I can deal with him.—Aloud. Go fetch pen, ink, and paper out of the next room. Mrs. Pinchwife Yes, bud. Exit. Pinchwife Why should women have more invention in love than men? It can only be, because they have more desires, more soliciting passions, more lust, and more of the devil. Reenter Mrs. Pinchwife. Come, minx, sit down and write. Mrs. Pinchwife Ay, dear bud, but I can't do't very well. Pinchwife I wish you could not at all. Mrs. Pinchwife But what should I write for? Pinchwife I'll have you write a letter to your lover. Mrs. Pinchwife O Lord, to the fine gentleman a letter!

Pinchwife Yes, to the fine gentleman. Mrs. Pinchwife Lord, you do but jeer: sure you jest. Pinchwife I am not so merry: come, write as I bid you. Mrs. Pinchwife What, do you think I am a fool? Pinchwife Aside. She's afraid I would not dictate any love to him, therefore she's unwilling.—Aloud. But you had best begin. Mrs. Pinchwife Indeed, and indeed, but I won't, so I won't. Pinchwife Why? Mrs. Pinchwife Because he's in town; you may send for him if you will. Pinchwife Very well, you would have him brought to you; is it come to this? I say, take the pen and write, or you'll provoke me. Mrs. Pinchwife Lord, what d'ye make a fool of me for? Don't I know that letters are never writ but from the country to London, and from London into the country? Now he's in town, and I am in town too; therefore I can't write to him, you know. Pinchwife Aside. So, I am glad it is no worse; she is innocent enough yet.—Aloud. Yes, you may, when your husband bids you, write letters to people that are in town. Mrs. Pinchwife O, may I so? then I'm satisfied. Pinchwife Come, begin:—"Sir"—Dictates. Mrs. Pinchwife Shan't I say, "Dear Sir?"—You know one says always something more than bare "sir." Pinchwife Write as I bid you, or I will write whore with this penknife in your face. Mrs. Pinchwife Nay, good bud—"Sir"—Writes. Pinchwife "Though I suffered last night your nauseous, loathed kisses and embraces"—Write! Mrs. Pinchwife Nay, why should I say so? You know I told you he had a sweet breath. Pinchwife Write! Mrs. Pinchwife Let me but put out "loathed." Pinchwife Write, I say! Mrs. Pinchwife Well then. Writes. Pinchwife Let's see, what have you writ?—Takes the paper and reads. "Though I suffered last night your kisses and embraces"—Thou impudent creature! where is "nauseous" and "loathed?" Mrs. Pinchwife I can't abide to write such filthy words. Pinchwife Once more write as I'd have you, and question it not, or I will spoil thy writing with this. I will stab out those eyes that cause my mischief. Holds up the penknife. Mrs. Pinchwife O Lord! I will. Pinchwife So—so—let's see now.—Reads. "Though I suffered last night your nauseous, loathed kisses and embraces"—go on—"yet I would not have

you presume that you shall ever repeat them”—so—She writes. Mrs. Pinchwife I have writ it. Pinchwife On, then—“I then concealed myself from your knowledge, to avoid your insolencies.”—She writes. Mrs. Pinchwife So— Pinchwife “The same reason, now I am out of your hands—” She writes. Mrs. Pinchwife So— Pinchwife “Makes me own to you my unfortunate, though innocent frolic, of being in man’s clothes”—She writes. Mrs. Pinchwife So— Pinchwife “That you may forevermore cease to pursue her, who hates and detests you”—She writes on. Mrs. Pinchwife So—heigh! Sighs. Pinchwife What, do you sigh?—“detests you—as much as she loves her husband and her honour—” Mrs. Pinchwife I vow, husband, he’ll ne’er believe I should write such a letter. Pinchwife What, he’d expect a kinder from you? Come, now your name only. Mrs. Pinchwife What, shan’t I say “Your most faithful humble servant till death?” Pinchwife No, tormenting fiend!—Aside. Her style, I find, would be very soft.—Aloud. Come, wrap it up now whilst I go fetch wax and a candle; and write on the backside, “For Mr. Horner.” Exit. Mrs. Pinchwife “For Mr. Horner.”—So, I am glad he has told me his name. Dear Mr. Horner! but why should I send thee such a letter that will vex thee, and make thee angry with me?—Well, I will not send it.—Ay, but then my husband will kill me—for I see plainly he won’t let me love Mr. Horner—but what care I for my husband?—I won’t, so I won’t, send poor Mr. Horner such a letter—But then my husband—but oh, what if I writ at bottom my husband made me write it?—Ay, but then my husband would see’t—Can one have no shift? ah, a London woman would have had a hundred presently. Stay—what if I should write a letter, and wrap it up like this, and write upon’t too? Ay, but then my husband would see’t—I don’t know what to do.—But yet evads I’ll try, so I will—for I will not send this letter to poor Mr. Horner, come what will on’t. “Dear, sweet Mr. Horner”—Writes and repeats what she writes.—so—“my husband would have me send you a base, rude, unmannerly letter; but I won’t”—so—“and would have me forbid you loving

me; but I won't"—so—"and would have me say to you, I hate you, poor Mr. Horner; but I won't tell a lie for him"—there—"for I'm sure if you and I were in the country at cards together"—so—"I could not help treading on your toe under the table"—so—"or rubbing knees with you, and staring in your face, till you saw me"—very well—"and then looking down, and blushing for an hour together"—so—"but I must make haste before my husband comes: and now he has taught me to write letters, you shall have longer ones from me, who am, dear, dear, poor, dear Mr. Horner, your most humble friend, and servant to command till death—Margery Pinchwife." Stay, I must give him a hint at bottom—so—now wrap it up just like t'other—so—now write "For Mr. Horner"—But oh now, what shall I do with it? for here comes my husband. Reenter Pinchwife. Pinchwife Aside. I have been detained by a sparkish coxcomb, who pretended a visit to me; but I fear 'twas to my wife—Aloud. What, have you done? Mrs. Pinchwife Ay, ay, bud, just now. Pinchwife Let's see't: what d'ye tremble for? what, you would not have it go? Mrs. Pinchwife Here—Aside. No, I must not give him that: so I had been served if I had given him this. He opens and reads the first letter. Pinchwife Come, where's the wax and seal? Mrs. Pinchwife Aside. Lord, what shall I do now? Nay, then I have it—Aloud. Pray let me see't. Lord, you think me so arrant a fool, I cannot seal a letter; I will do't, so I will. Snatches the letter from him, changes it for the other, seals it, and delivers it to him. Pinchwife Nay, I believe you will learn that, and other things too, which I would not have you. Mrs. Pinchwife So, han't I done it curiously?9—Aside. I think I have; there's my letter going to Mr. Horner, since he'll needs have me send letters to folks. Pinchwife 'Tis very well; but I warrant, you would not have it go now? Mrs. Pinchwife Yes, indeed, but I would, bud, now. Pinchwife Well, you are a good girl then. Come, let me lock you up in your chamber, till I come back; and be sure you come not within three strides of the window when I am gone, for I have a spy in the street.—Exit Mrs. Pinchwife, Pinchwife locks the door. At least, 'tis fit she think so. If we do not cheat women,

they'll cheat us, and fraud may be justly used with secret enemies, of which a wife is the most dangerous; and he that has a handsome one to keep, and a frontier town, must provide against treachery, rather than open force. Now I have secured all within, I'll deal with the foe without, with false intelligence. Holds up the letter. Exit.

Scene III

Horner's lodging

Enter Horner and Quack. Quack Well, sir, how fadges10 the new design? have you not the luck of all your brother projectors, to deceive only yourself at last? Horner No, good domine doctor, I deceive you, it seems, and others too; for the grave matrons, and old, rigid husbands think me as unfit for love, as they are; but their wives, sisters, and daughters know, some of 'em, better things already. Quack Already! Horner Already, I say. Last night I was drunk with half-a-dozen of your civil persons, as you call 'em, and people of honour, and so was made free of their society and dressing-rooms forever hereafter; and am already come to the privileges of sleeping upon their pallets, warming smocks, tying shoes and garters, and the like, doctor, already, already, doctor. Quack You have made good use of your time, sir. Horner I tell thee, I am now no more interruption to 'em, when they sing, or talk bawdy, than a little squab French page who speaks no English. Quack But do civil persons and women of honour drink, and sing bawdy songs? Horner O, amongst friends, amongst friends. For your bigots in honour are just like those in religion; they fear the eye of the world more than the eye of Heaven; and think there is no virtue, but railing at vice, and no sin, but giving scandal. They rail at a poor, little, kept player, and keep themselves some young, modest pulpit comedian to be privy to their sins in their closets, not to tell 'em of them in their chapels. Quack Nay, the truth on't is, priests, amongst the women now, have quite got the better of us lay-confessors, physicians. Horner And they are rather their patients; but— Enter

Lady Fidget, looking about her. Now we talk of women of honour, here comes one. Step behind the screen there, and but observe, if I have not particular privileges with the women of reputation already, doctor, already. Quack retires. Lady Fidget Well, Horner, am not I a woman of honour? you see, I'm as good as my word. Horner And you shall see, madam, I'll not be behindhand with you in honour; and I'll be as good as my word too, if you please but to withdraw into the next room. Lady Fidget But first, my dear sir, you must promise to have a care of my dear honour. Horner If you talk a word more of your honour, you'll make me incapable to wrong it. To talk of honour in the mysteries of love, is like talking of Heaven or the Deity, in an operation of witchcraft, just when you are employing the devil: it makes the charm impotent. Lady Fidget Nay, fy! let us not be smutty. But you talk of mysteries and bewitching to me; I don't understand you. Horner I tell you, madam, the word money in a mistress's mouth, at such a nick of time, is not a more disheartening sound to a younger brother, than that of honour to an eager lover like myself. Lady Fidget But you can't blame a lady of my reputation to be chary. Horner Chary! I have been chary of it already, by the report I have caused of myself. Lady Fidget Ay, but if you should ever let other women know that dear secret, it would come out. Nay, you must have a great care of your conduct; for my acquaintance are so censorious, (oh, 'tis a wicked, censorious world, Mr. Horner!) I say, are so censorious, and detracting, that perhaps they'll talk to the prejudice of my honour, though you should not let them know the dear secret. Horner Nay, madam, rather than they shall prejudice your honour, I'll prejudice theirs; and, to serve you, I'll lie with 'em all, make the secret their own, and then they'll keep it. I am a Machiavel in love, madam. Lady Fidget O, no sir, not that way. Horner Nay, the devil take me, if censorious women are to be silenced any other way. Lady Fidget A secret is better kept, I hope, by a single person than a multitude; therefore pray do not trust anybody else with it, dear, dear Mr. Horner. Embracing him. Enter Sir Jasper Fidget. Sir Jasper How now! Lady Fidget Aside. O my husband!—prevented—and what's

almost as bad, found with my arms about another man—that will appear too much—what shall I say?—Aloud. Sir Jasper, come hither: I am trying if Mr. Horner were ticklish, and he's as ticklish as can be. I love to torment the confounded toad; let you and I tickle him. Sir Jasper No, your ladyship will tickle him better without me, I suppose. But is this your buying china? I thought you had been at the china-house. Horner Aside. China-house! that's my cue, I must take it.—Aloud. A pox! can't you keep your impertinent wives at home? Some men are troubled with the husbands, but I with the wives; but I'd have you to know, since I cannot be your journeyman by night, I will not be your drudge by day, to squire your wife about, and be your man of straw, or scarecrow only to pies and jays, that would be nibbling at your forbidden fruit; I shall be shortly the hackney gentleman-usher of the town. Sir Jasper Aside. He! he! he! poor fellow, he's in the right on't, faith. To squire women about for other folks is as ungrateful an employment, as to tell money for other folks.—Aloud. He! he! he! be'n't angry, Horner. Lady Fidget No, 'tis I have more reason to be angry, who am left by you, to go abroad indecently alone; or, what is more indecent, to pin myself upon such ill-bred people of your acquaintance as this is. Sir Jasper Nay, prithee, what has he done? Lady Fidget Nay, he has done nothing. Sir Jasper But what d'ye take ill, if he has done nothing? Lady Fidget Ha! ha! ha! faith, I can't but laugh however; why, d'ye think the unmannerly toad would come down to me to the coach? I was fain to come up to fetch him, or go without him, which I was resolved not to do; for he knows china very well, and has himself very good, but will not let me see it, lest I should beg some; but I will find it out, and have what I came for yet. Horner Apart to Lady Fidget, as he follows her to the door. Lock the door, madam.— Exit Lady Fidget, and locks the door. Aloud.—So, she has got into my chamber and locked me out. Oh the impertinency of womankind! Well, Sir Jasper, plain-dealing is a jewel; if ever you suffer your wife to trouble me again here, she shall carry you home a pair of horns; by my lord mayor she shall; though I cannot furnish you myself, you are sure, yet I'll find a

way. Sir Jasper Ha! ha! he!—Aside. At my first coming in, and finding her arms about him, tickling him it seems, I was half jealous, but now I see my folly.—Aloud. He! he! he! poor Horner. Horner Nay, though you laugh now, ’twill be my turn ere long. Oh women, more impertinent, more cunning, and more mischievous than their monkeys, and to me almost as ugly!—Now is she throwing my things about and rifling all I have; but I’ll get into her the back way, and so rifle her for it. Sir Jasper Ha! ha! ha! poor angry Horner. Horner Stay here a little, I’ll ferret her out to you presently, I warrant. Exit at the other door. Sir Jasper talks through the door to his Wife, she answers from within. Sir Jasper Wife! my Lady Fidget! wife! he is coming in to you the back way. Lady Fidget Let him come, and welcome, which way he will. Sir Jasper He’ll catch you, and use you roughly, and be too strong for you. Lady Fidget Don’t you trouble yourself, let him if he can. Quack Aside. This indeed I could not have believed from him, nor any but my own eyes. Enter Mrs. Squeamish. Mrs. Squeamish Where’s this woman-hater, this toad, this ugly, greasy, dirty sloven? Sir Jasper Aside. So, the women all will have him ugly; methinks he is a comely person, but his wants make his form contemptible to ’em; and ’tis e’en as my wife said yesterday, talking of him, that a proper handsome eunuch was as ridiculous a thing as a gigantic coward. Mrs. Squeamish Sir Jasper, your servant: where is the odious beast? Sir Jasper He’s within in his chamber, with my wife; she’s playing the wag with him. Mrs. Squeamish Is she so? and he’s a clownish beast, he’ll give her no quarter, he’ll play the wag with her again, let me tell you: come, let’s go help her—What, the door’s locked? Sir Jasper Ay, my wife locked it. Mrs. Squeamish Did she so? let’s break it open then. Sir Jasper No, no, he’ll do her no hurt. Mrs. Squeamish Aside. But is there no other way to get in to ’em? whither goes this? I will disturb ’em. Exit at another door. Enter Old Lady Squeamish. Lady Squeamish Where is this harlotry, this impudent baggage, this rambling tomrigg?11 O Sir Jasper, I’m glad to see you here; did you not see my vile grandchild come in hither just now? Sir Jasper Yes. Lady Squeamish Ay, but where

is she then? where is she? Lord, Sir Jasper, I have e'en rattled myself to pieces in pursuit of her: but can you tell what she makes here? they say below, no woman lodges here. Sir Jasper No. Lady Squeamish No! what does she here then? say, if it be not a woman's lodging, what makes she here? But are you sure no woman lodges here? Sir Jasper No, nor no man neither, this is Mr. Horner's lodging. Lady Squeamish Is it so, are you sure? Sir Jasper Yes, yes. Lady Squeamish So; then there's no hurt in't, I hope. But where is he? Sir Jasper He's in the next room with my wife. Lady Squeamish Nay, if you trust him with your wife, I may with my Biddy. They say, he's a merry harmless man now, e'en as harmless a man as ever came out of Italy with a good voice, and as pretty, harmless company for a lady, as a snake without his teeth. Sir Jasper Ay, ay, poor man. Reenter Mrs. Squeamish. Mrs. Squeamish I can't find 'em.—Oh, are you here, grandmother? I followed, you must know, my Lady Fidget hither; 'tis the prettiest lodging, and I have been staring on the prettiest pictures— Reenter Lady Fidget with a piece of china in her hand, and Horner following. Lady Fidget And I have been toiling and moiling for the prettiest piece of china, my dear. Horner Nay, she has been too hard for me, do what I could. Mrs. Squeamish Oh, lord, I'll have some china too. Good Mr. Horner, don't think to give other people china, and me none; come in with me too. Horner Upon my honour, I have none left now. Mrs. Squeamish Nay, nay, I have known you deny your china before now, but you shan't put me off so. Come. Horner This lady had the last there. Lady Fidget Yes indeed, madam, to my certain knowledge, he has no more left. Mrs. Squeamish O, but it may be he may have some you could not find. Lady Fidget What, d'ye think if he had had any left, I would not have had it too? for we women of quality never think we have china enough. Horner Do not take it ill, I cannot make china for you all, but I will have a roll-wagon for you too, another time. Mrs. Squeamish Thank you, dear toad. Lady Fidget What do you mean by that promise? Aside to Horner. Horner Alas, she has an innocent, literal understanding. Aside to Lady Fidget. Lady Squeamish Poor Mr. Horner! he has enough to do to

please you all, I see. Horner Ay, madam, you see how they use me. Lady Squeamish Poor gentleman, I pity you. Horner I thank you, madam: I could never find pity, but from such reverend ladies as you are; the young ones will never spare a man. Mrs. Squeamish Come, come, beast, and go dine with us; for we shall want a man at ombre after dinner. Horner That's all their use of me, madam, you see. Mrs. Squeamish Come, sloven, I'll lead you, to be sure of you. Pulls him by the cravat. Lady Squeamish Alas, poor man, how she tugs him! Kiss, kiss her; that's the way to make such nice women quiet. Horner No, madam, that remedy is worse than the torment; they know I dare suffer anything rather than do it. Lady Squeamish Prithee kiss her, and I'll give you her picture in little, that you admired so last night; prithee do. Horner Well, nothing but that could bribe me: I love a woman only in effigy, and good painting as much as I hate them.—I'll do't, for I could adore the devil well painted. Kisses Mrs. Squeamish. Mrs. Squeamish Foh, you filthy toad! nay, now I've done jesting. Lady Squeamish Ha! ha I ha! I told you so. Mrs. Squeamish Foh! a kiss of his— Sir Jasper Has no more hurt in't than one of my spaniel's. Mrs. Squeamish Nor no more good neither. Quack I will now believe anything he tells me. Aside. Enter Pinchwife. Lady Fidget O lord, here's a man! Sir Jasper, my mask, my mask! I would not be seen here for the world. Sir Jasper What, not when I am with you? Lady Fidget No, no, my honour—let's be gone. Mrs. Squeamish Oh grandmother, let's be gone; make haste, make haste, I know not how he may censure us. Lady Fidget Be found in the lodging of anything like a man!—Away. Exeunt Sir Jasper Fidget, Lady Fidget, Old Lady Squeamish, and Mrs. Squeamish. Quack What's here? another cuckold? he looks like one, and none else sure have any business with him. Aside. Horner Well, what brings my dear friend hither? Pinchwife Your impertinency. Horner My impertinency!—why, you gentlemen that have got handsome wives, think you have a privilege of saying anything to your friends, and are as brutish as if you were our creditors. Pinchwife No, sir, I'll ne'er trust you anyway. Horner But why not, dear Jack? why diffide in me thou know'st

so well? Pinchwife Because I do know you so well. Horner Han't I been always thy friend, honest Jack, always ready to serve thee, in love or battle, before thou wert married, and am so still? Pinchwife I believe so, you would be my second now, indeed. Horner Well then, dear Jack, why so unkind, so grum, so strange to me? Come, prithee kiss me, dear rogue: gad I was always, I say, and am still as much thy servant as— Pinchwife As I am yours, sir. What, you would send a kiss to my wife, is that it? Horner So, there 'tis—a man can't show his friendship to a married man, but presently he talks of his wife to you. Prithee, let thy wife alone, and let thee and I be all one, as we were wont. What, thou art as shy of my kindness, as a Lombard-street alderman of a courtier's civility at Locket's!12 Pinchwife But you are over-kind to me, as kind as if I were your cuckold already; yet I must confess you ought to be kind and civil to me, since I am so kind, so civil to you, as to bring you this: look you there, sir. Delivers him a letter. Horner What is't? Pinchwife Only a love-letter, sir. Horner From whom?—how! this is from your wife—hum—and hum—Reads. Pinchwife Even from my wife, sir: am I not wondrous kind and civil to you now too?—Aside. But you'll not think her so. Horner Ha! is this a trick of his or hers? Aside. Pinchwife The gentleman's surprised I find.—What, you expected a kinder letter? Horner No faith, not I, how could I? Pinchwife Yes, yes, I'm sure you did. A man so well made as you are, must needs be disappointed, if the women declare not their passion at first sight or opportunity. Horner Aside. But what should this mean? Stay, the postscript.—Reads aside. "Be sure you love me, whatsoever my husband says to the contrary, and let him not see this, lest he should come home and pinch me, or kill my squirrel."—It seems he knows not what the letter contains. Pinchwife Come, ne'er wonder at it so much. Horner Faith, I can't help it. Pinchwife Now, I think I have deserved your infinite friendship and kindness, and have showed myself sufficiently an obliging kind friend and husband; am I not so, to bring a letter from my wife to her gallant? Horner Ay, the devil take me, art thou, the most obliging, kind friend and husband in

the world, ha! ha! Pinchwife Well, you may be merry, sir; but in short I must tell you, sir, my honour will suffer no jesting. Horner What dost thou mean? Pinchwife Does the letter want a comment? Then, know, sir, though I have been so civil a husband, as to bring you a letter from my wife, to let you kiss and court her to my face, I will not be a cuckold, sir, I will not. Horner Thou art mad with jealousy. I never saw thy wife in my life but at the play yesterday, and I know not if it were she or no. I court her, kiss her! Pinchwife I will not be a cuckold, I say; there will be danger in making me a cuckold. Horner Why, wert thou not well cured of thy last clap? Pinchwife I wear a sword. Horner It should be taken from thee, lest thou shouldst do thyself a mischief with it; thou art mad, man. Pinchwife As mad as I am, and as merry as you are, I must have more reason from you ere we part. I say again, though you kissed and courted last night my wife in man's clothes, as she confesses in her letter— Horner Ha! Aside. Pinchwife Both she and I say, you must not design it again, for you have mistaken your woman, as you have done your man. Horner Aside. O—I understand something now—Aloud. Was that thy wife! Why wouldst thou not tell me 'twas she? Faith, my freedom with her was your fault, not mine. Pinchwife Faith, so 'twas. Aside. Horner Fy! I'd never do't to a woman before her husband's face, sure. Pinchwife But I had rather you should do't to my wife before my face, than behind my back; and that you shall never do. Horner No—you will hinder me. Pinchwife If I would not hinder you, you see by her letter she would. Horner Well, I must e'en acquiesce then, and be contented with what she writes. Pinchwife I'll assure you 'twas voluntarily writ; I had no hand in't you may believe me. Horner I do believe thee, faith. Pinchwife And believe her too, for she's an innocent creature, has no dissembling in her: and so fare you well, sir. Horner Pray, however, present my humble service to her, and tell her, I will obey her letter to a tittle, and fulfil her desires, be what they will, or with what difficulty soever I do't; and you shall be no more jealous of me, I warrant her, and you. Pinchwife Well then, fare you well; and play with any man's honour but mine, kiss

any man's wife but mine, and welcome. Exit. Horner Ha! ha! ha! doctor. Quack It seems, he has not heard the report of you, or does not believe it. Horner Ha! ha!—now, doctor, what think you? Quack Pray let's see the letter—hum—"for—dear—love you—" Reads the letter. Horner I wonder how she could contrive it! What say'st thou to't? 'tis an original. Quack So are your cuckolds too originals: for they are like no other common cuckolds, and I will henceforth believe it not impossible for you to cuckold the Grand Signior amidst his guards of eunuchs, that I say. Horner And I say for the letter, 'tis the first love-letter that ever was without flames, darts, fates, destinies, lying and dissembling in't. Enter Sparkish pulling in Pinchwife. Sparkish Come back, you are a pretty brother-in-law, neither go to church nor to dinner with your sister bride! Pinchwife My sister denies her marriage, and you see is gone away from you dissatisfied. Sparkish Pshaw! upon a foolish scruple, that our parson was not in lawful orders, and did not say all the common-prayer; but 'tis her modesty only I believe. But let all women be never so modest the first day, they'll be sure to come to themselves by night, and I shall have enough of her then. In the meantime, Harry Horner, you must dine with me: I keep my wedding at my aunt's in the Piazza.13 Horner Thy wedding! what stale maid has lived to despair of a husband, or what young one of a gallant? Sparkish O, your servant, sir—this gentleman's sister then—no stale maid. Horner I'm sorry for't. Pinchwife How comes he so concerned for her? Aside. Sparkish You sorry for't? why, do you know any ill by her? Horner No, I know none but by thee; 'tis for her sake, not yours, and another man's sake that might have hoped, I thought. Sparkish Another man! another man! what is his name? Horner Nay, since 'tis past, he shall be nameless.—Aside. Poor Harcourt! I am sorry thou hast missed her. Pinchwife He seems to be much troubled at the match. Aside. Sparkish Prithee, tell me—Nay, you shan't go, brother. Pinchwife I must of necessity, but I'll come to you to dinner. Exit. Sparkish But, Harry, what, have I a rival in my wife already? But with all my heart, for he may be of use to me hereafter; for though my hunger is

now my sauce, and I can fall on heartily without, the time will come, when a rival will be as good sauce for a married man to a wife, as an orange to veal. Horner O thou damned rogue! thou hast set my teeth on edge with thy orange. Sparkish Then let's to dinner—there I was with you again. Come. Horner But who dines with thee? Sparkish My friends and relations, my brother Pinchwife, you see, of your acquaintance. Horner And his wife? Sparkish No, 'gad, he'll ne'er let her come amongst us good fellows; your stingy country coxcomb keeps his wife from his friends, as he does his little firkin of ale, for his own drinking, and a gentleman can't get a smack on't; but his servants, when his back is turned, broach it at their pleasures, and dust it away, ha! ha! ha!—'Gad, I am witty, I think, considering I was married today, by the world; but come— Horner No, I will not dine with you, unless you can fetch her too. Sparkish Pshaw! what pleasure canst thou have with women now, Harry? Horner My eyes are not gone; I love a good prospect yet, and will not dine with you unless she does too; go fetch her, therefore, but do not tell her husband 'tis for my sake. Sparkish Well, I'll go try what I can do; in the meantime, come away to my aunt's lodging, 'tis in the way to Pinchwife's. Horner The poor woman has called for aid, and stretched forth her hand, doctor; I cannot but help her over the pale out of the briars. Exeunt.

Scene IV

A room in Pinchwife's house.

Mrs. Pinchwife alone, leaning on her elbow.—A table, pen, ink and paper. Mrs. Pinchwife Well, 'tis e'en so, I have got the London disease they call love; I am sick of my husband, and for my gallant. I have heard this distemper called a fever, but methinks 'tis like an ague; for when I think of my husband, I tremble, and am in a cold sweat, and have inclinations to vomit; but when I think of my gallant, dear Mr. Horner, my hot fit comes, and I am all in a fever indeed; and, as in other fevers, my own chamber is tedious to me, and I would fain be removed to his, and then

methinks I should be well. Ah, poor Mr. Horner! Well, I cannot, will not stay here; therefore I'll make an end of my letter to him, which shall be a finer letter than my last, because I have studied it like anything. Oh sick, sick! Takes the pen and writes. Enter Pinchwife, who seeing her writing, steals softly behind her and looking over her shoulder, snatches the paper from her. Pinchwife What, writing more letters? Mrs. Pinchwife O Lord, bud, why d'ye fright me so? She offers to run out; he stops her, and reads. Pinchwife How's this? nay, you shall not stir, madam:—"Dear, dear, dear Mr. Horner"—very well—I have taught you to write letters to good purpose—but let us see't. "First, I am to beg your pardon for my boldness in writing to you, which I'd have you to know I would not have done, had not you said first you loved me so extremely, which if you do, you will never suffer me to lie in the arms of another man whom I loathe, nauseate, and detest."—Now you can write these filthy words. But what follows?—"Therefore, I hope you will speedily find some way to free me from this unfortunate match, which was never, I assure you, of my choice, but I'm afraid 'tis already too far gone; however, if you love me, as I do you, you will try what you can do; but you must help me away before tomorrow, or else, alas! I shall be forever out of your reach, for I can defer no longer our—our—" what is to follow "our"?—speak, what—our journey into the country I suppose—Oh woman, damned woman! and Love, damned Love, their old tempter! for this is one of his miracles; in a moment he can make those blind that could see, and those see that were blind, those dumb that could speak, and those prattle who were dumb before; nay, what is more than all, make these dough-baked, senseless, indocile animals, women, too hard for us their politic lords and rulers, in a moment. But make an end of your letter, and then I'll make an end of you thus, and all my plagues together. Draws his sword. Mrs. Pinchwife O Lord, O Lord, you are such a passionate man, bud! Enter Sparkish. Sparkish How now, what's here to do? Pinchwife This fool here now! Sparkish What! drawn upon your wife? You should never do that, but at night in the dark, when you can't hurt her. This is my

sister-in-law, is it not? ay, faith, e'en our country Margery; Pulls aside her handkerchief one may know her. Come, she and you must go dine with me; dinner's ready, come. But where's my wife? is she not come home yet? where is she? Pinchwife Making you a cuckold; 'tis that they all do, as soon as they can. Sparkish What, the wedding-day? no, a wife that designs to make a cully of her husband will be sure to let him win the first stake of love, by the world. But come, they stay dinner for us: come, I'll lead down our Margery. Pinchwife No—sir, go, we'll follow you. Sparkish I will not wag without you. Pinchwife This coxcomb is a sensible torment to me amidst the greatest in the world. Aside. Sparkish Come, come, Madam Margery. Pinchwife No; I'll lead her my way: what, would you treat your friends with mine, for want of your own wife?—Leads her to the other door, and locks her in and returns. I am contented my rage should take breath—Aside. Sparkish I told Horner this. Pinchwife Come now. Sparkish Lord, how shy you are of your wife! but let me tell you, brother, we men of wit have amongst us a saying, that cuckolding, like the smallpox, comes with a fear; and you may keep your wife as much as you will out of danger of infection, but if her constitution incline her to't, she'll have it sooner or later, by the world, say they. Pinchwife

Aside. What a thing is a cuckold, that every fool can make him ridiculous!—Aloud. Well, sir—but let me advise you, now you are come to be concerned, because you suspect the danger, not to neglect the means to prevent it, especially when the greatest share of the malady will light upon your own head, for

Hows'e'er the kind wife's belly comes to swell, The husband breeds for her, and first is ill.

Act V

Scene I

Pinchwife's House.

Enter Pinchwife and Mrs. Pinchwife. A table and candle. Pinchwife Come, take the pen and make an end of the letter, just as you intended; if you are false in a tittle, I shall soon perceive it, and punish you as you deserve.—Lays his hand on his sword. Write what was to follow—let's see—"You must make haste, and help me away before tomorrow, or else I shall be forever out of your reach, for I can defer no longer our"—What follows "our"? Mrs. Pinchwife Must all out, then, bud?—Look you there, then. Mrs. Pinchwife takes the pen and writes. Pinchwife Let's see—"For I can defer no longer our—wedding—Your slighted Alithea."—What's the meaning of this? my sister's name to't? speak, unriddle. Mrs. Pinchwife Yes, indeed, bud. Pinchwife But why her name to't? speak—speak, I say. Mrs. Pinchwife Ay, but you'll tell her then again. If you would not tell her again— Pinchwife I will not:—I am stunned, my head turns round.—Speak. Mrs. Pinchwife Won't you tell her, indeed, and indeed? Pinchwife No; speak, I say. Mrs. Pinchwife She'll be angry with me; but I had rather she should be angry with me than you, bud; and, to tell you the truth, 'twas she made me write the letter, and taught me what I should write. Pinchwife Aside. Ha!—I thought the style was somewhat better than her own.—Aloud. Could she come to you to teach you, since I had locked you up alone? Mrs. Pinchwife O, through the keyhole, bud. Pinchwife But why should she make you write a letter for her to him, since she can write herself? Mrs. Pinchwife Why, she said because—for I was unwilling to do it— Pinchwife Because what—because? Mrs. Pinchwife Because, lest Mr. Horner should be cruel, and refuse her; or be vain afterwards, and show the letter, she might disown it, the hand not being hers. Pinchwife Aside. How's this? Ha!—then I think I shall come to myself again.—This changeling could not invent this lie: but if she could, why should she? she might think I should soon discover it.—Stay—now I think on't too, Horner said he was sorry she had married Sparkish; and her disowning her marriage to me makes me think she has

evaded it for Horner's sake: yet why should she take this course? But men in love are fools; women may well be so—Aloud. But hark you, madam, your sister went out in the morning, and I have not seen her within since. Mrs. Pinchwife Alack-a-day, she has been crying all day above, it seems, in a corner. Pinchwife Where is she? let me speak with her. Mrs. Pinchwife Aside. O Lord, then she'll discover all!—Aloud. Pray hold, bud; what, d'ye mean to discover me? she'll know I have told you then. Pray, bud, let me talk with her first. Pinchwife I must speak with her, to know whether Horner ever made her any promise, and whether she be married to Sparkish or no. Mrs. Pinchwife Pray, dear bud, don't, till I have spoken with her, and told her that I have told you all; for she'll kill me else. Pinchwife Go then, and bid her come out to me. Mrs. Pinchwife Yes, yes, bud. Pinchwife Let me see—Pausing. Mrs. Pinchwife Aside. I'll go, but she is not within to come to him: I have just got time to know of Lucy her maid, who first set me on work, what lie I shall tell next; for I am e'en at my wit's end. Exit. Pinchwife Well, I resolve it, Horner shall have her: I'd rather give him my sister than lend him my wife; and such an alliance will prevent his pretensions to my wife, sure. I'll make him of kin to her, and then he won't care for her. Reenter Mrs. Pinchwife. Mrs. Pinchwife O Lord, bud! I told you what anger you would make me with my sister. Pinchwife Won't she come hither? Mrs. Pinchwife No, no. Lack-a-day, she's ashamed to look you in the face: and she says, if you go in to her, she'll run away downstairs, and shamefully go herself to Mr. Horner, who has promised her marriage, she says; and she will have no other, so she won't. Pinchwife Did he so?—promise her marriage!—then she shall have no other. Go tell her so; and if she will come and discourse with me a little concerning the means, I will about it immediately. Go.— Exit Mrs. Pinchwife. His estate is equal to Sparkish's, and his extraction as much better than his, as his parts are; but my chief reason is, I'd rather be akin to him by the name of brother-in-law than that of cuckold. Reenter Mrs. Pinchwife. Well, what says she now? Mrs. Pinchwife Why, she says, she would only

have you lead her to Horner's lodging; with whom she first will discourse the matter before she talks with you, which yet she cannot do; for alack, poor creature, she says she can't so much as look you in the face, therefore she'll come to you in a mask. And you must excuse her, if she make you no answer to any question of yours, till you have brought her to Mr. Horner; and if you will not chide her, nor question her, she'll come out to you immediately. Pinchwife Let her come: I will not speak a word to her, nor require a word from her. Mrs. Pinchwife Oh, I forgot: besides she says, she cannot look you in the face, though through a mask; therefore would desire you to put out the candle. Pinchwife I agree to all. Let her make haste.—There, 'tis out— Puts out the candle. Exit Mrs. Pinchwife. My case is something better: I'd rather fight with Horner for not lying with my sister, than for lying with my wife; and of the two, I had rather find my sister too forward than my wife. I expected no other from her free education, as she calls it, and her passion for the town. Well, wife and sister are names which make us expect love and duty, pleasure and comfort; but we find 'em plagues and torments, and are equally, though differently, troublesome to their keeper; for we have as much ado to get people to lie with our sisters as to keep 'em from lying with our wives. Reenter Mrs. Pinchwife masked, and in hoods and scarfs, and a nightgown and petticoat of Alithea's. What, are you come, sister? let us go then.—But first, let me lock up my wife. Mrs. Margery, where are you? Mrs. Pinchwife Here, bud. Pinchwife Come hither, that I may lock you up: get you in.—Locks the door. Come, sister, where are you now? Mrs. Pinchwife gives him her hand; but when he lets her go, she steals softly on to the other side of him, and is led away by him for his Sister, Alithea.

Scene II

Horner's Lodging.

Horner and Quack. Quack What, all alone? not so much as one of your cuckolds here, nor one of their wives! They use to take their turns with you, as if they were to

watch you. Horner Yes, it often happens that a cuckold is but his wife's spy, and is more upon family duty when he is with her gallant abroad, hindering his pleasure, than when he is at home with her playing the gallant. But the hardest duty a married woman imposes upon a lover is keeping her husband company always. Quack And his fondness wearies you almost as soon as hers. Horner A pox! keeping a cuckold company, after you have had his wife, is as tiresome as the company of a country squire to a witty fellow of the town, when he has got all his money. Quack And as at first a man makes a friend of the husband to get the wife, so at last you are fain to fall out with the wife to be rid of the husband. Horner Ay, most cuckold-makers are true courtiers; when once a poor man has cracked his credit for 'em, they can't abide to come near him. Quack But at first, to draw him in, are so sweet, so kind, so dear! just as you are to Pinchwife. But what becomes of that intrigue with his wife? Horner A pox! he's as surly as an alderman that has been bit; and since he's so coy, his wife's kindness is in vain, for she's a silly innocent. Quack Did she not send you a letter by him? Horner Yes; but that's a riddle I have not yet solved. Allow the poor creature to be willing, she is silly too, and he keeps her up so close— Quack Yes, so close, that he makes her but the more willing, and adds but revenge to her love; which two, when met, seldom fail of satisfying each other one way or other. Horner What! here's the man we are talking of, I think. Enter Pinchwife, leading in his Wife masked, muffled, and in her Sister's gown. Pshaw! Quack Bringing his wife to you is the next thing to bringing a love-letter from her. Horner What means this? Pinchwife The last time, you know, sir, I brought you a love-letter; now, you see, a mistress; I think you'll say I am a civil man to you. Horner Ay, the devil take me, will I say thou art the civilest man I ever met with; and I have known some. I fancy I understand thee now better than I did the letter. But, hark thee, in thy ear— Pinchwife What? Horner Nothing but the usual question, man: is she sound, on thy word? Pinchwife What, you take her for a wench, and me for a pimp? Horner Pshaw! wench and pimp, paw14 words; I know thou art an honest fellow, and hast a

great acquaintance among the ladies, and perhaps hast made love for me, rather than let me make love to thy wife. Pinchwife Come, sir, in short, I am for no fooling. Horner Nor I neither: therefore prithee, let's see her face presently. Make her show, man: art thou sure I don't know her? Pinchwife I am sure you do know her. Horner A pox! why dost thou bring her to me then? Pinchwife Because she's a relation of mine— Horner Is she, faith, man? then thou art still more civil and obliging, dear rogue. Pinchwife Who desired me to bring her to you. Horner Then she is obliging, dear rogue. Pinchwife You'll make her welcome for my sake, I hope. Horner I hope she is handsome enough to make herself welcome. Prithee let her unmask. Pinchwife Do you speak to her; she would never be ruled by me. Horner Madam—Mrs. Pinchwife whispers to Horner. She says she must speak with me in private. Withdraw, prithee. Pinchwife Aside. She's unwilling, it seems, I should know all her indecent conduct in this business—Aloud. Well then, I'll leave you together, and hope when I am gone, you'll agree; if not, you and I shan't agree, sir. Horner What means the fool? if she and I agree 'tis no matter what you and I do. Whispers to Mrs. Pinchwife, who makes signs with her hand for him to be gone. Pinchwife In the meantime I'll fetch a parson, and find out Sparkish, and disabuse him. You would have me fetch a parson, would you not? Well then—now I think I am rid of her, and shall have no more trouble with her—our sisters and daughters, like usurers' money, are safest when put out; but our wives, like their writings, never safe, but in our closets under lock and key. Exit. Enter Boy. Boy Sir Jasper Fidget, sir, is coming up. Exit. Horner Here's the trouble of a cuckold now we are talking of. A pox on him! has he not enough to do to hinder his wife's sport, but he must other women's too?—Step in here, madam. Exit Mrs. Pinchwife. Enter Sir Jasper Fidget. Sir Jasper My best and dearest friend. Horner Aside to Quack. The old style, doctor.—Aloud. Well, be short, for I am busy. What would your impertinent wife have now? Sir Jasper Well guessed, i'faith; for I do come from her. Horner To invite me to supper! Tell her, I can't come; go. Sir Jasper Nay, now you are out, faith; for

my lady, and the whole knot of the virtuous gang, as they call themselves, are resolved upon a frolic of coming to you tonight in masquerade, and are all dressed already. Horner I shan't be at home. Sir Jasper Aside. Lord, how churlish he is to women!—Aloud. Nay, prithee don't disappoint 'em; they'll think 'tis my fault: prithee don't. I'll send in the banquet and the fiddles. But make no noise on't; for the poor virtuous rogues would not have it known, for the world, that they go a-masquerading; and they would come to no man's ball but yours. Horner Well, well—get you gone; and tell 'em, if they come, 'twill be at the peril of their honour and yours. Sir Jasper He! he! he!—we'll trust you for that: farewell. Exit. Horner

Doctor, anon you too shall be my guest, But now I'm going to a private feast.

Exeunt.

Scene III

The Piazza of Covent Garden.

Enter Sparkish with a letter in his hand, Pinchwife following. Sparkish But who would have thought a woman could have been false to me? By the world, I could not have thought it. Pinchwife You were for giving and taking liberty: she has taken it only, sir, now you find in that letter. You are a frank person, and so is she, you see there. Sparkish Nay, if this be her hand—for I never saw it. Pinchwife 'Tis no matter whether that be her hand or no; I am sure this hand, at her desire, led her to Mr. Horner, with whom I left her just now, to go fetch a parson to 'em at their desire too, to deprive you of her forever; for it seems yours was but a mock marriage. Sparkish Indeed, she would needs have it that 'twas Harcourt himself, in a parson's habit, that married us; but I'm sure he told me 'twas his brother Ned. Pinchwife O, there 'tis out; and you were deceived, not she: for you are such a frank person. But I must be gone.—You'll find her at Mr. Horner's. Go, and believe your eyes. Exit. Sparkish Nay, I'll to her, and call her as many crocodiles, sirens, harpies, and other

heathenish names, as a poet would do a mistress who had refused to hear his suit, nay more, his verses on her.—But stay, is not that she following a torch at t'other end of the Piazza? and from Horner's certainly—'tis so. Enter Alithea following a torch, and Lucy behind. You are well met, madam, though you don't think so. What, you have made a short visit to Mr. Horner? but I suppose you'll return to him presently, by that time the parson can be with him. Alithea Mr. Horner and the parson, sir! Sparkish Come, madam, no more dissembling, no more jilting; for I am no more a frank person. Alithea How's this? Lucy So, 'twill work, I see. Aside. Sparkish Could you find out no easy country fool to abuse? none but me, a gentleman of wit and pleasure about the town? But it was your pride to be too hard for a man of parts, unworthy false woman! false as a friend that lends a man money to lose; false as dice, who undo those that trust all they have to 'em. Lucy He has been a great bubble, by his similes, as they say. Aside. Alithea You have been too merry, sir, at your wedding-dinner, sure. Sparkish What, d'ye mock me too? Alithea Or you have been deluded. Sparkish By you. Alithea Let me understand you. Sparkish Have you the confidence, (I should call it something else, since you know your guilt,) to stand my just reproaches? you did not write an impudent letter to Mr. Horner? who I find now has clubbed with you in deluding me with his aversion for women, that I might not, forsooth, suspect him for my rival. Lucy D'ye think the gentleman can be jealous now, madam? Aside. Alithea I write a letter to Mr. Horner! Sparkish Nay, madam, do not deny it. Your brother showed it me just now; and told me likewise, he left you at Horner's lodging to fetch a parson to marry you to him; and I wish you joy, madam, joy, joy; and to him too, much joy; and to myself more joy, for not marrying you. Alithea Aside. So, I find my brother would break off the match; and I can consent to't, since I see this gentleman can be made jealous.—Aloud. O Lucy, by his rude usage and jealousy, he makes me almost afraid I am married to him. Art thou sure 'twas Harcourt himself, and no parson, that married us? Sparkish No, madam, I thank you. I suppose, that was a contrivance too

of Mr. Horner's and yours, to make Harcourt play the parson; but I would as little as you have him one now, no, not for the world. For, shall I tell you another truth? I never had any passion for you till now, for now I hate you. 'Tis true, I might have married your portion, as other men of parts of the town do sometimes; and so, your servant. And to show my unconcernedness, I'll come to your wedding, and resign you with as much joy, as I would a stale wench to a new cully; nay, with as much joy as I would after the first night, if I had been married to you. There's for you; and so your servant, servant. Exit. Alithea How was I deceived in a man! Lucy You'll believe then a fool may be made jealous now? for that easiness in him that suffers him to be led by a wife, will likewise permit him to be persuaded against her by others. Alithea But marry Mr. Horner! my brother does not intend it, sure: if I thought he did, I would take thy advice, and Mr. Harcourt for my husband. And now I wish, that if there be any over-wise woman of the town, who, like me, would marry a fool for fortune, liberty, or title, first, that her husband may love play, and be a cully to all the town but her, and suffer none but Fortune to be mistress of his purse; then, if for liberty, that he may send her into the country, under the conduct of some huswifely mother-in-law; and if for title, may the world give 'em none but that of cuckold. Lucy And for her greater curse, madam, may he not deserve it. Alithea Away, impertinent! Is not this my old Lady Lanterlu's?15 Lucy Yes, madam.—Aside. And here I hope we shall find Mr. Harcourt. Exeunt.

Scene IV

Horner's Lodging. A table, banquet, and bottles.

Enter Horner, Lady Fidget, Mrs. Dainty Fidget, and Mrs. Squeamish. Horner A pox! they are come too soon—before I have sent back my new mistress. All that I have now to do is to lock her in, that they may not see her. Aside. Lady Fidget That we may be sure of our welcome, we have brought our entertainment with us, and are resolved to treat thee, dear toad. Mrs. Dainty And that we may be merry to purpose,

have left Sir Jasper and my old Lady Squeamish, quarrelling at home at backgammon. Mrs. Squeamish Therefore let us make use of our time, lest they should chance to interrupt us. Lady Fidget Let us sit then. Horner First, that you may be private, let me lock this door and that, and I'll wait upon you presently. Lady Fidget No, sir, shut 'em only, and your lips forever; for we must trust you as much as our women. Horner You know all vanity's killed in me; I have no occasion for talking. Lady Fidget Now, ladies, supposing we had drank each of us our two bottles, let us speak the truth of our hearts. Mrs. Dainty and Mrs. Squeamish Agreed. Lady Fidget By this brimmer, for truth is nowhere else to be found—Aside to Horner. not in thy heart, false man! Horner You have found me a true man, I'm sure. Aside to Lady Fidget. Lady Fidget

Aside to Horner. Not every way.—But let us sit and be merry. Sings.

Why should our damned tyrants oblige us to live On the pittance of pleasure which they only give? We must not rejoice With wine and with noise: In vain we must wake in a dull bed alone, Whilst to our warm rival the bottle they're gone. Then lay aside charms, And take up these arms.16 'Tis wine only gives 'em their courage and wit; Because we live sober, to men we submit. If for beauties you'd pass, Take a lick of the glass, 'Twill mend your complexions, and when they are gone, The best red we have is the red of the grape: Then, sisters, lay't on, And damn a good shape.

Mrs. Dainty Dear brimmer! Well, in token of our openness and plain-dealing, let us throw our masks over our heads. Horner So, 'twill come to the glasses anon. Aside. Mrs. Squeamish Lovely brimmer! let me enjoy him first. Lady Fidget No, I never part with a gallant till I've tried him. Dear brimmer! that makest our husbands shortsighted. Mrs. Dainty And our bashful gallants bold. Mrs. Squeamish And, for want of a gallant, the butler lovely in our eyes.—Drink, eunuch. Lady Fidget Drink, thou representative of a husband.—Damn a husband! Mrs. Dainty And, as it were a husband, an old keeper. Mrs. Squeamish And an old grandmother. Horner

And an English bawd, and a French surgeon. Lady Fidget Ay, we have all reason to curse ’em. Horner For my sake, ladies? Lady Fidget No, for our own; for the first spoils all young gallants’ industry. Mrs. Dainty And the other’s art makes ’em bold only with common women. Mrs. Squeamish And rather run the hazard of the vile distemper amongst them, than of a denial amongst us. Mrs. Dainty The filthy toads choose mistresses now as they do stuffs, for having been fancied and worn by others. Mrs. Squeamish For being common and cheap. Lady Fidget Whilst women of quality, like the richest stuffs, lie untumbled, and unasked for. Horner Ay, neat, and cheap, and new, often they think best. Mrs. Dainty No, sir, the beasts will be known by a mistress longer than by a suit. Mrs. Squeamish And ’tis not for cheapness neither. Lady Fidget No; for the vain fops will take up druggets, and embroider ’em. But I wonder at the depraved appetites of witty men; they use to be out of the common road, and hate imitation. Pray tell me, beast, when you were a man, why you rather chose to club with a multitude in a common house for an entertainment, than to be the only guest at a good table. Horner Why, faith, ceremony and expectation are unsufferable to those that are sharp bent. People always eat with the best stomach at an ordinary, where every man is snatching for the best bit. Lady Fidget Though he get a cut over the fingers.—But I have heard, that people eat most heartily of another man’s meat, that is, what they do not pay for. Horner When they are sure of their welcome and freedom; for ceremony in love and eating is as ridiculous as in fighting: falling on briskly is all should be done on those occasions. Lady Fidget Well then, let me tell you, sir, there is nowhere more freedom than in our houses; and we take freedom from a young person as a sign of good breeding; and a person may be as free as he pleases with us, as frolic, as gamesome, as wild as he will. Horner Han’t I heard you all declaim against wild men? Lady Fidget Yes; but for all that, we think wildness in a man as desirable a quality as in a duck or rabbit: a tame man! foh! Horner I know not, but your reputations frightened me as much as your faces invited me. Lady Fidget Our

reputation! Lord, why should you not think that we women make use of our reputation, as you men of yours, only to deceive the world with less suspicion? Our virtue is like the statesman's religion, the quaker's word, the gamester's oath, and the great man's honour; but to cheat those that trust us. Mrs. Squeamish And that demureness, coyness, and modesty, that you see in our faces in the boxes at plays, is as much a sign of a kind woman, as a vizard-mask in the pit. Mrs. Dainty For, I assure you, women are least masked when they have the velvet vizard on. Lady Fidget You would have found us modest women in our denials only. Mrs. Squeamish Our bashfulness is only the reflection of the men's. Mrs. Dainty We blush when they are shamefaced. Horner I beg your pardon, ladies, I was deceived in you devilishly. But why that mighty pretence to honour? Lady Fidget We have told you; but sometimes 'twas for the same reason you men pretend business often, to avoid ill company, to enjoy the better and more privately those you love. Horner But why would you ne'er give a friend a wink then? Lady Fidget Faith, your reputation frightened us, as much as ours did you, you were so notoriously lewd. Horner And you so seemingly honest. Lady Fidget Was that all that deterred you? Horner And so expensive—you allow freedom, you say. Lady Fidget Ay, ay. Horner That I was afraid of losing my little money, as well as my little time, both which my other pleasures required. Lady Fidget Money! foh! you talk like a little fellow now: do such as we expect money? Horner I beg your pardon, madam, I must confess, I have heard that great ladies, like great merchants, set but the higher prices upon what they have, because they are not in necessity of taking the first offer. Mrs. Dainty Such as we make sale of our hearts? Mrs. Squeamish We bribed for our love? foh! Horner With your pardon ladies, I know, like great men in offices, you seem to exact flattery and attendance only from your followers; but you have receivers about you, and such fees to pay, a man is afraid to pass your grants. Besides, we must let you win at cards, or we lose your hearts; and if you make an assignation, 'tis at a goldsmith's, jeweller's, or china-house; where for your honour

you deposit to him, he must pawn his to the punctual cit, and so paying for what you take up, pays for what he takes up. Mrs. Dainty Would you not have us assured of our gallants' love? Mrs. Squeamish For love is better known by liberality than by jealousy. Lady Fidget For one may be dissembled, the other not.—Aside. But my jealousy can be no longer dissembled, and they are telling ripe.—Aloud.—Come, here's to our gallants in waiting, whom we must name, and I'll begin. This is my false rogue. Claps him on the back. Mrs. Squeamish How! Horner So, all will out now. Aside. Mrs. Squeamish Did you not tell me, 'twas for my sake only you reported yourself no man? Aside to Horner. Mrs. Dainty Oh, wretch! did you not swear to me, 'twas for my love and honour you passed for that thing you do? Aside to Horner. Horner So, so. Lady Fidget Come, speak, ladies: this is my false villain. Mrs. Squeamish And mine too. Mrs. Dainty And mine. Horner Well then, you are all three my false rogues too, and there's an end on't. Lady Fidget Well then, there's no remedy; sister sharers, let us not fall out, but have a care of our honour. Though we get no presents, no jewels of him, we are savers of our honour, the jewel of most value and use, which shines yet to the world unsuspected, though it be counterfeit. Horner Nay, and is e'en as good as if it were true, provided the world think so; for honour, like beauty now, only depends on the opinion of others. Lady Fidget Well, Harry Common, I hope you can be true to three. Swear; but 'tis to no purpose to require your oath, for you are as often forsworn as you swear to new women. Horner Come, faith, madam, let us e'en pardon one another; for all the difference I find betwixt we men and you women, we forswear ourselves at the beginning of an amour, you as long as it lasts. Enter Sir Jasper Fidget, and Old Lady Squeamish. Sir Jasper Oh, my Lady Fidget, was this your cunning, to come to Mr. Horner without me? but you have been nowhere else, I hope. Lady Fidget No, Sir Jasper. Lady Squeamish And you came straight hither, Biddy? Mrs. Squeamish Yes, indeed, lady grandmother. Sir Jasper 'Tis well, 'tis well; I knew when once they were thoroughly acquainted with poor Horner, they'd ne'er be from him: you

may let her masquerade it with my wife and Horner, and I warrant her reputation safe. Enter Boy. Boy O, sir, here's the gentleman come, whom you bid me not suffer to come up, without giving you notice, with a lady too, and other gentlemen. Horner Do you all go in there, whilst I send 'em away; and, boy, do you desire 'em to stay below till I come, which shall be immediately. Exeunt Sir Jasper Fidget, Lady Fidget, Lady Squeamish, Mrs. Squeamish, and Mrs. Dainty Fidget. Boy Yes, sir. Exit. Exit Horner at the other door, and returns with Mrs. Pinchwife. Horner You would not take my advice, to be gone home before your husband came back, he'll now discover all; yet pray, my dearest, be persuaded to go home, and leave the rest to my management; I'll let you down the back way. Mrs. Pinchwife I don't know the way home, so I don't. Horner My man shall wait upon you. Mrs. Pinchwife No, don't you believe that I'll go at all; what, are you weary of me already? Horner No, my life, 'tis that I may love you long, 'tis to secure my love, and your reputation with your husband; he'll never receive you again else. Mrs. Pinchwife What care I? d'ye think to frighten me with that? I don't intend to go to him again; you shall be my husband now. Horner I cannot be your husband, dearest, since you are married to him. Mrs. Pinchwife O, would you make me believe that? Don't I see every day at London here, women leave their first husbands, and go and live with other men as their wives? pish, pshaw! you'd make me angry, but that I love you so mainly. Horner So, they are coming up—In again, in, I hear 'em.— Exit Mrs. Pinchwife.
Well, a silly mistress is like a weak place, soon got, soon lost, a man has scarce time for plunder; she betrays her husband first to her gallant, and then her gallant to her husband. Enter Pinchwife, Alithea, Harcourt, Sparkish, Lucy, and a Parson. Pinchwife Come, madam, 'tis not the sudden change of your dress, the confidence of your asseverations, and your false witness there, shall persuade me I did not bring you hither just now; here's my witness, who cannot deny it, since you must be confronted.—Mr. Horner, did not I bring this lady to you just now? Horner Now must I wrong one woman for another's sake—but that's no new thing with me, for

in these cases I am still on the criminal's side against the innocent. Aside. Alithea Pray speak, sir. Horner It must be so. I must be impudent, and try my luck; impudence uses to be too hard for truth. Aside. Pinchwife What, you are studying an evasion or excuse for her! Speak, sir. Horner No, faith, I am something backward only to speak in women's affairs or disputes. Pinchwife She bids you speak. Alithea Ay, pray, sir, do, pray satisfy him. Horner Then truly, you did bring that lady to me just now. Pinchwife O ho! Alithea How, sir? Harcourt How, Horner? Alithea What mean you, sir? I always took you for a man of honour. Horner Ay, so much a man of honour, that I must save my mistress, I thank you, come what will on't. Aside. Sparkish So, if I had had her, she'd have made me believe the moon had been made of a Christmas pie. Lucy Now could I speak, if I durst, and solve the riddle, who am the author of it. Aside. Alithea O unfortunate woman! A combination against my honour! which most concerns me now, because you share in my disgrace, sir, and it is your censure, which I must now suffer, that troubles me, not theirs. Harcourt Madam, then have no trouble, you shall now see 'tis possible for me to love too, without being jealous; I will not only believe your innocence myself, but make all the world believe it.—Aside to Horner. Horner, I must now be concerned for this lady's honour. Horner And I must be concerned for a lady's honour too. Harcourt This lady has her honour, and I will protect it. Horner My lady has not her honour, but has given it me to keep, and I will preserve it. Harcourt I understand you not. Horner I would not have you. Mrs. Pinchwife What's the matter with 'em all? Peeping in behind. Pinchwife Come, come, Mr. Horner, no more disputing; here's the parson, I brought him not in vain. Harcourt No, sir, I'll employ him, if this lady please. Pinchwife How! what d'ye mean? Sparkish Ay, what does he mean? Horner Why, I have resigned your sister to him, he has my consent. Pinchwife But he has not mine, sir; a woman's injured honour, no more than a man's, can be repaired or satisfied by any but him that first wronged it; and you shall marry her presently, or—Lays his hand on his sword. Reenter Mrs. Pinchwife. Mrs. Pinchwife O Lord,

they'll kill poor Mr. Horner! besides, he shan't marry her whilst I stand by, and look on; I'll not lose my second husband so. Pinchwife What do I see? Alithea My sister in my clothes! Sparkish Ha! Mrs. Pinchwife Nay, pray now don't quarrel about finding work for the parson, he shall marry me to Mr. Horner; or now, I believe, you have enough of me. To Pinchwife. Horner Damned, damned loving changeling! Aside. Mrs. Pinchwife Pray, sister, pardon me for telling so many lies of you. Horner I suppose the riddle is plain now. Lucy No, that must be my work.—Good sir, hear me. Kneels to Pinchwife, who stands doggedly with his hat over his eyes. Pinchwife I will never hear woman again, but make 'em all silent thus—Offers to draw upon his Wife. Horner No, that must not be. Pinchwife You then shall go first, 'tis all one to me. Offers to draw on Horner, but is stopped by Harcourt. Harcourt Hold! Reenter Sir Jasper Fidget, Lady Fidget, Lady Squeamish, Mrs. Dainty Fidget, and Mrs. Squeamish. Sir Jasper What's the matter? what's the matter? pray, what's the matter, sir? I beseech you communicate, sir. Pinchwife Why, my wife has communicated, sir, as your wife may have done too, sir, if she knows him, sir. Sir Jasper Pshaw, with him! ha! ha! he! Pinchwife D'ye mock me, sir? a cuckold is a kind of a wild beast; have a care, sir. Sir Jasper No, sure, you mock me, sir. He cuckold you! it can't be, ha! ha! he! why, I'll tell you, sir—Offers to whisper. Pinchwife I tell you again, he has whored my wife, and yours too, if he knows her, and all the women he comes near; 'tis not his dissembling, his hypocrisy, can wheedle me. Sir Jasper How! does he dissemble? is he a hypocrite? Nay, then—how—wife—sister, is he a hypocrite? Lady Squeamish A hypocrite! a dissembler! Speak, young harlotry, speak, how? Sir Jasper Nay, then—O my head too!—O thou libidinous lady! Lady Squeamish O thou harloting harlotry! hast thou done't then? Sir Jasper Speak, good Horner, art thou a dissembler, a rogue? hast thou— Horner So! Lucy I'll fetch you off, and her too, if she will but hold her tongue. Apart to Horner. Horner Canst thou? I'll give thee—Apart to Lucy. Lucy To Pinchwife. Pray have but patience to hear me, sir, who am the unfortunate cause

of all this confusion. Your wife is innocent, I only culpable; for I put her upon telling you all these lies concerning my mistress, in order to the breaking off the match between Mr. Sparkish and her, to make way for Mr. Harcourt. Sparkish Did you so, eternal rotten tooth? Then, it seems, my mistress was not false to me, I was only deceived by you. Brother, that should have been, now man of conduct, who is a frank person now, to bring your wife to her lover, ha? Lucy I assure you, sir, she came not to Mr. Horner out of love, for she loves him no more— Mrs. Pinchwife Hold, I told lies for you, but you shall tell none for me, for I do love Mr. Horner with all my soul, and nobody shall say me nay; pray, don't you go to make poor Mr. Horner believe to the contrary; 'tis spitefully done of you, I'm sure. Horner Peace, dear idiot. Aside to Mrs. Pinchwife. Mrs. Pinchwife Nay, I will not peace. Pinchwife Not till I make you. Enter Dorilant and Quack. Dorilant Horner, your servant; I am the doctor's guest, he must excuse our intrusion. Quack But what's the matter, gentlemen? for Heaven's sake, what's the matter? Horner Oh, 'tis well you are come. 'Tis a censorious world we live in; you may have brought me a reprieve, or else I had died for a crime I never committed, and these innocent ladies had suffered with me; therefore, pray satisfy these worthy, honourable, jealous gentlemen—that—Whispers. Quack O, I understand you, is that all?—Sir Jasper, by Heavens, and upon the word of a physician, sir—Whispers to Sir Jasper. Sir Jasper Nay, I do believe you truly.—Pardon me, my virtuous lady, and dear of honour. Lady Squeamish What, then all's right again? Sir Jasper Ay, ay, and now let us satisfy him too. They whisper with Pinchwife. Pinchwife An eunuch! Pray, no fooling with me. Quack I'll bring half the chirurgeons in town to swear it. Pinchwife They!—they'll swear a man that bled to death through his wounds, died of an apoplexy. Quack Pray, hear me, sir—why, all the town has heard the report of him. Pinchwife But does all the town believe it? Quack Pray, inquire a little, and first of all these. Pinchwife I'm sure when I left the town, he was the lewdest fellow in't. Quack I tell you, sir, he has been in France since; pray, ask but these ladies and

gentlemen, your friend Mr. Dorilant. Gentlemen and ladies, han't you all heard the late sad report of poor Mr. Horner? All the Ladies. Ay, ay, ay. Dorilant Why, thou jealous fool, dost thou doubt it? he's an arrant French capon. Mrs. Pinchwife 'Tis false, sir, you shall not disparage poor Mr. Horner, for to my certain knowledge— Lucy O, hold! Mrs. Squeamish Stop her mouth! Aside to Lucy. Lady Fidget Upon my honour, sir, 'tis as true—To Pinchwife. Mrs. Dainty D'ye think we would have been seen in his company? Mrs. Squeamish Trust our unspotted reputations with him? Lady Fidget This you get, and we too, by trusting your secret to a fool. Aside to Horner. Horner Peace, madam.—Aside to Quack. Well, doctor, is not this a good design, that carries a man on unsuspected, and brings him off safe? Pinchwife Well, if this were true—but my wife—Aside. Dorilant whispers with Mrs. Pinchwife. Alithea Come, brother, your wife is yet innocent, you see; but have a care of too strong an imagination, lest, like an over-concerned timorous gamester, by fancying an unlucky cast, it should come. Women and fortune are truest still to those that trust 'em. Lucy And any wild thing grows but the more fierce and hungry for being kept up, and more dangerous to the keeper. Alithea There's doctrine for all husbands, Mr. Harcourt. Harcourt I edify, madam, so much, that I am impatient till I am one. Dorilant And I edify so much by example, I will never be one. Sparkish And because I will not disparage my parts, I'll ne'er be one. Horner And I, alas! can't be one. Pinchwife But I must be one—against my will to a country wife, with a country murrain to me! Mrs. Pinchwife And I must be a country wife still too, I find; for I can't, like a city one, be rid of my musty husband, and do what I list. Aside. Horner Now, sir, I must pronounce your wife innocent, though I blush whilst I do it; and I am the only man by her now exposed to shame, which I will straight drown in wine, as you shall your suspicion; and the ladies' troubles we'll divert with a ballad.—Doctor, where are your maskers? Lucy Indeed, she's innocent, sir, I am her witness, and her end of coming out was but to see her sister's wedding; and what she has said to your face of her love to Mr. Horner, was but the usual innocent

revenge on a husband’s jealousy;—was it not, madam, speak? Mrs. Pinchwife Aside to Lucy and Horner. Since you’ll have me tell more lies—Aloud. Yes, indeed, bud. Pinchwife

For my own sake fain I would all believe; Cuckolds, like lovers, should themselves deceive. But—Sighs. His honour is least safe (too late I find) Who trusts it with a foolish wife or friend.

A Dance of Cuckolds. Horner

Vain fops but court and dress, and keep a pother, To pass for women’s men with one another; But he who aims by women to be prized, First by the men, you see, must be despised.

Colophon

The Country Wife was published in 1675 by William Wycherley.

This ebook was produced for Standard Ebooks by B. Timothy Keith, and is based on a transcription produced in 2017 by Clare Graham and Marc D’Hooghe at Free Literature for Project Gutenberg and on digital scans from the Internet Archive.

The cover page is adapted from The Greeting, a painting completed in 1675 by Pieter de Hooch. The cover and title pages feature the League Spartan and Sorts Mill Goudy typefaces created in 2014 and 2009 by The League of Moveable Type.

This edition was released on November 15, 2026, 3:10 a.m. and is based on revision c6cd67e. The first edition of this ebook was released on August 14, 2021, 12:38 a.m. You can check for updates to this ebook, view its revision history, or download it for different ereading systems at standardebooks.org/ebooks/william-wycherley/the-country-wife.

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Dramatis Personae

Mr. Horner.

Mr. Harcourt.

Mr. Dorilant.

Mr. Pinchwife.

Mr. Sparkish.

Sir Jasper Fidget.

A Boy.

A Quack.

Waiters, Servants, and Attendants.

Mrs. Margery Pinchwife.

Alithea, Sister of Pinchwife.

Lady Fidget.

Mrs. Dainty Fidget, Sister of Sir Jasper.

Mrs. Squeamish.

Old Lady Squeamish.

Lucy, Alithea’s Maid.

Scene—London.

Endnotes

I am out of patience when anything is blamed, not because it is thought coarsely and inelegantly composed, but because it is new: when for the ancients not indulgence,

but honour and rewards are demanded. —Epist. II i 76–8

Charles Hart, grandson of Shakespeare's sister, Joan Hart, was one of the most distinguished actors of his time. He excelled chiefly in tragedy, and it was said of him that he "might teach any king on earth how to comport himself." He retired from the stage in 1682, and died in the following year.

A character in Ben Jonson's comedy, The Alchemist.

Sir Martin Mar-all is the title of a comedy by Dryden, first produced in 1667. In the scene referred to, Sir Martin serenades his mistress, going through the motions of singing and accompanying himself with the lute, while the actual performance is that of his man, who is concealed behind him. The lady discovers the imposition, through Sir Martin's failing to leave off at the right time.

Chatelain's was a famous French ordinary in Covent Garden, much frequented by wits and men of fashion. It is mentioned by Pepys, and often referred to by Shadwell in his plays. The Cock Tavern was in Bow Street, near where Wycherley and his first wife, the Countess of Drogheda, lodged; and it was here that the windows had to be left open when Wycherley frequented it, that the countess might see there were no ladies in the company.

I.e. The New Exchange, a long building, erected upon the site of the stables of Durham House, on the south side of the Strand, and nearly opposite Bedford Street. Opened in 1609, it became a fashionable lounge after the Restoration, and was pulled down in 1737. "It was erected partly on the plan of the Royal Exchange, with vaults beneath, over which was an open paved arcade; and above were walks of shops, occupied by perfumers and publishers, milliners and sempstresses." —Timbs' Curiosities of London

"Covent Garden Drolery, Or a Colection of all the Choice Songs, Poems, Prologues, and Epilogues (Sung and Spoken at Courts and Theaters) never in Print before. Written by the refined'st Witts of the Age. And Collected by R[ichard] B[rome]

Servant to His Majestie. London, Printed for James Magnes neer the Piazza in Russel-Street, 1672."—Tarugo's Wiles, or the Coffee House; a comedy by Sir Thomas St. Serle, produced in 1668.—The Slighted Maid, a comedy by Sir Robert Stapleton, produced in 1663.

A sweet-scented powder.

Carefully.

Succeeds.

Romp; tomboy.

A well frequented ordinary near Charing Cross, on the site of Drummond's Bank.

In Wycherley's time the square of Covent Garden must have presented an elegant appearance. The Piazza, designed by Inigo Jones, extended, like the modern piazza, along the northern and eastern sides; on the west stood St. Paul's Church, built by the same famous architect, and on the south the square was bordered by the gardens of Bedford House. "The area was enclosed with railings, at sixty feet from the buildings; and in the centre was a dial, with a gilt ball, raised upon a column." Timbs' Curiosities of London. In 1671 the market was established, but was held, originally, only on the southern side of the square, under the wall of Bedford Gardens. The houses within the Piazza were then occupied by persons of rank and fashion.

Paw, adj. naughty. An affected word fashionable in the latter half of the seventeenth century. —Wright

"Lanterloo" or "langteraloo" was the name of a game at cards.

The glasses.

Or Knipp, the friend of Mr. Pepys. She played the part of Lady Fidget.

Indignor quidquam reprehendi, non quia crasse Compositum illepideve putetur, sed

quia nuper: Nec veniam antiquis, sed honorem et praemia posci.1

Horat.

Epilogue

Spoken by Mrs. Knep.17

Now you the vigorous, who daily here O’er vizard-mask in public domineer, And what you’d do to her, if in place where; Nay, have the confidence to cry, “Come out!” Yet when she says, “Lead on!” you are not stout; But to your well-dressed brother straight turn round, And cry “Pox on her, Ned, she can’t be sound!” Then slink away, a fresh one to engage, With so much seeming heat and loving rage, You’d frighten listening actress on the stage; Till she at last has seen you huffing come, And talk of keeping in the tiring-room, Yet cannot be provoked to lead her home. Next, you Falstaffs of fifty, who beset Your buckram maidenheads, which your friends get; And whilst to them you of achievements boast, They share the booty, and laugh at your cost. In fine, you essenced boys, both old and young, Who would be thought so eager, brisk, and strong, Yet do the ladies, not their husbands wrong; Whose purses for your manhood make excuse, And keep your Flanders mares for show not use; Encouraged by our woman’s man today, A Horner’s part may vainly think to play; And may intrigues so bashfully disown, That they may doubted be by few or none; May kiss the cards at picquet, ombre, loo, And so be taught to kiss the lady too; But, gallants, have a care, faith, what you do. The world, which to no man his due will give, You by experience know you can deceive, And men may still believe you vigorous, But then we women—there’s no cozening us.

The Country Wife

Imprint

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Introduction

The Country Wife was written, according to its author’s own statement, about the year 1671 or 1672. Its production upon the stage was subsequent to that of The Gentleman Dancing-Master, to which allusion is made in the prologue, and antecedent to that of the earlier-written Plain Dealer, in the second act of which the author inserted some critical observations upon The Country Wife. The first performance of The Plain Dealer, as will afterwards appear, admits not of a later date than that of March, or the very beginning of April, 1674; it follows then that The Country Wife was brought forward some time between the early spring of 1672

and that of 1674. It was acted by the King's Company, established during these two years at the theatre in Portugal Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields, and was published in the year 1675.

If we can overlook the immorality which, in this play, is more offensive and pronounced than in any of Wycherley's other dramas, we shall find in The Country Wife a brilliantly written and skilfully constructed comedy, superior to either of the preceding dramas from the same pen, and surpassed, among comedies of the Restoration, only by its author's own masterpiece, The Plain Dealer. The plot of The Country Wife is partly based upon two comedies by Molière—L'Ecole des Femmes and L'Ecole des Maris. From the former of these Wycherley derived his conception of the jealous man who keeps under close restraint a young and ignorant woman, with the vain hope of thereby securing her fidelity to him. Agnes's innocent confessions to Arnolphe of her lover's stratagems and her own esteem for him find a counterpart in the Country Wife's frankness on a similar occasion, but beyond these points of coincidence there is little resemblance between the two plays. From L'Ecole des Maris, again, Wycherley has borrowed one or two incidents: the imprisoned girl's device of making her would-be husband (in the English play, her actual husband) the bearer of a letter to her gallant, and the trick by which Isabella causes her tyrant, under the impression that she is another woman, to consign her with his own hands to his rival.

Steele has published, in the Tatler of April 16, 1709, a very just criticism upon this play, which, as it cannot fail to interest the reader, I venture to subjoin.

"Will's Coffeehouse, April 14.

"This evening the Comedy, called The Country Wife, was acted in Drury Lane, for the benefit of Mrs. Bignell. The part which gives name to the Play was performed by herself. Through the whole action she made a very pretty figure, and exactly entered into the nature of the part. Her husband, in the Drama, is represented to be one of

those debauchees who run through the vices of the town, and believe, when they think fit, they can marry and settle at their ease. His own knowledge of the iniquity of the age makes him choose a wife wholly ignorant of it, and place his security in her want of skill to abuse him. The Poet, on many occasions, where the propriety of the character will admit of it, insinuates that there is no defence against vice but the contempt of it: and has, in the natural ideas of an untainted innocent, shown the gradual steps to ruin and destruction which persons of condition run into, without the help of a good education to form their conduct. The torment of a jealous coxcomb, which arises from his own false maxims, and the aggravation of his pain by the very words in which he sees her innocence, makes a very pleasant and instructive satire. The character of Horner, and the design of it, is a good representation of the age in which that Comedy was written: at which time love and wenching were the business of life, and the gallant manner of pursuing women was the best recommendation at Court. To this only it is to be imputed that a Gentleman of Mr. Wycherley's character and sense condescends to represent the insults done to the honour of the bed without just reproof; but to have drawn a man of probity with regard to such considerations had been a monster, and a Poet had at that time discovered his want of knowing the manners of the Court he lived in, by a virtuous character in his fine gentleman, as he would show his ignorance by drawing a vicious one to please the present audience."

Prologue

Spoken by Mr. Hart.2

Poets, like cudgelled bullies, never do At first or second blow submit to you; But will provoke you still, and ne'er have done, Till you are weary first with laying on. The late so baffled scribbler of this day, Though he stands trembling, bids me boldly say, What we before most plays are used to do, For poets out of fear first draw on

you; In a fierce prologue the still pit defy, And, ere you speak, like Castril3 give the lie. But though our Bayes's battles oft I've fought, And with bruised knuckles their dear conquests bought; Nay, never yet feared odds upon the stage, In prologue dare not hector with the age; But would take quarter from your saving hands, Though Bayes within all yielding countermands, Says, you confederate wits no quarter give, Therefore his play shan't ask your leave to live. Well, let the vain rash fop, by huffing so, Think to obtain the better terms of you; But we, the actors, humbly will submit, Now, and at any time, to a full pit; Nay, often we anticipate your rage, And murder poets for you on our stage: We set no guards upon our tiring-room, But when with dying colours there you come, We patiently, you see, give up to you Our poets, virgins, nay, our matrons too.

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