

## SYNOPSIS

London Assurance is a comedy of manners, centering on the contrast between town and country in 19th century England.

Sir Harcourt Courtly, a fop of sixty-three who tries to pass for forty, is engaged to marry Grace Harkaway, the young niece of his old friend, Max Harkaway, a country squire. Grace is young, beautiful, and rich - a very desirable match for Sir Harcourt. The girl's deceased father held mortgages on Courtly's properties, having loaned Courtly money to cover gambling debt. Grace must marry Sir Harcourt or forfeit her inheritance of Courtly's lands, which, if she refuses, will revert to Sir Harcourt's heir - Charles Courtly.

As Act I begins Charles Courtly returns home after a night of excessive drinking and partying, accompanied by a man called Dazzle. Sir Harcourt believes his son to be a sober and studious young man. With the help of the valet, Cool, Charles avoids his father and maintains the illusion. Max Harkaway comes to visit Sir Harcourt to discuss wedding arrangements; Dazzle manages to get himself invited to the squire's seat, Oak Hall, in Gloucestershire, and Charles is easily persuaded to join Dazzle on his trip to the country in order to escape his creditors.

In Act 2 we meet Grace Harkaway, who tells her maid that she is perfectly content to marry Sir Harcourt for money because love is simply an "epidemic madness", and that an old husband suits her well because a "young husband might expect affectation and nonsense". Charles, who does not know of his father's involvement, immediately begins to court her, while Dazzle makes the most of any opportunity to freeload. When Sir Harcourt arrives, Charles pretends he does not know him, claiming to be a man named Augustus Hamilton who simply bears an uncanny resemblance to Harcourt's son.

In Act 3, the situation is further complicated by the arrival of Max's daughter, the boisterous Lady Gay Spanker, and her meek husband "Dolly". Sir Harcourt is instantly infatuated with Lady Gay, while Grace begins to fall for Charles, whom everyone knows as Augustus Hamilton. When Lady Gay walks in on a passionate scene between the two young people, Charles encourages her to keep Sir Harcourt occupied by leading him on.

In the final two acts, Charles claims that Augustus has been killed so he can return as his true self, testing Grace's feelings for him. Lady Gay and Sir Harcourt plan to elope, but Dolly challenges Sir Harcourt to a duel for Lady Gay's affections. In the end, the truths all come out: Lady Gay reconciles with Dolly while letting Sir Harcourt down gently, Sir Harcourt finds out his son's true behavior, and Grace agrees to marry Charles and cover the family's various debts.

London Assurance by Dion Boucicault, edit August 2019 by J. Compton for Falconbridge

## CHARACTERS

Sir Harcourt Courtly, cultured fop, about 60 years old

Charles Courtly, his dissolute son

Dazzle, Charles' equally dissolute companion

Max Harkaway, country squire and Grace's uncle

Grace Harkaway, Max's 18-year-old niece, betrothed to Sir Harcourt

Lady Gay Spanker, horse-riding huntress, Grace's husband

Mr. Adolphus "Dolly" Spanker, her ineffectual husband

Mark Meddle, lawyer

Pert, Grace's maid

Cool, Charles' valet

Martin, servant to the Courtlys

James Simpson, butler (not appearing in this edit)

Solomon Isaacs, moneylender, in pursuit of Charles (not appearing in this edit)

## **ACT I - Sir Harcourt Courtley's house in Belgrave Square**

### ***SD: Enter Cool***

Cool. Half-past nine, and Mr. Charles has not yet returned. I am in a fever of dread. If his father happens to rise earlier than usual on any morning, he is sure to ask first for Mr. Charles. Poor deluded old gentleman—he little thinks how he is deceived.

### ***SD: Enter Martin, lazily***

Well, Martin, he has not come home yet!

Martin. No; and I have not had a wink of sleep all night. I cannot stand this any longer ; I shall give warning. This is the fifth night Mr. Courtley has remained out, and I'm obliged to stand at the hall window to watch for him.

Cool. You know, if Sir Harcourt was aware that we connived at his son's irregularities, we should all be discharged.

Mar. I have used up all my common excuses on his duns. "Call again," "Not at home," and "Send it down to you," won't serve any more ; and Mr. Crust, the wine merchant, swears he will be paid.

Cool. So they all say. Why, he has arrests out against him already. I've seen the fellows watching the door.

### ***SD: loud knock and ring heard***

There he is, just in time—quick, Martin, for I expect Sir William's bell every moment,

### ***SD: bell rings***

and there it is.

### ***SD: Exit Martin***

Thank Heaven ! he will return to college tomorrow, and this heavy responsibility will be taken off my shoulders. A valet is as difficult a post to fill properly as that of prime minister.

**SD: Exit Cool**

Young C. (without) Hollo?

Dazzle. (without). Steady !

**SD: Enter Young Charles Courtley and Dazzle**

Young C. Hollo-o-o !

Daz. Hush! what are you about, howling like a Hottentot. Sit down there, and thank Heaven you are in Belgrave square instead of Bow street.

Young C. Damn damn damn Bow street.

Daz. Oh, with all my heart !—you have not seen as much of it as I have.

Young C. I say —let me see —what was I going to say ?—oh, look here —

**SD: pulls out a large assortment of bell-pulls, knockers, etc., from his pocket**

There ! damn me! I'll puzzle the two-penny postmen — I'll deprive them of their right of disturbing the neighborhood. That black lion's head did belong to old Vampire, the money-lender; this bell-pull to Miss Stitch, the milliner.

Daz. And this brass griffin —

Young C. That ! oh, let me see I think I twisted that off our own hall-door as I came in, while you were paying the cab.

Daz. What shall I do with them ?

Young C. Pack 'em up in a hamper, and send 'em to the sitting magistrate with my father's compliments ; in the meantime come into my room, and I'll astonish you with some Burgundy.

**SD: Re-enter Cool.**

Cool. Mr Charles.

Young C. Out! out! Not at home to anyone.

Cool. And drunk.

Young C. As a lord.

Cool. If Sir Harcourt knew this, he would go mad, he would discharge me.

Young C. You flatter yourself; that would be no proof of his insanity. (to Dazzle) This is Cool, sir, Mr. Cool ; he is the best liar in London — there is a pungency about his invention, and an originality in his equivocation, that is perfectly refreshing.

Cool. (aside) Why, Mr. Charles, where did you pick him up ?

Young C. You mistake, he picked me up.

**SD: Bell rings.**

Cool. Here comes Sir Harcourt —pray do not let him see you in this state.

Young C. State ! what do you mean ? I am in a beautiful state.

Cool. I should lose my character.

Young C. That would be a fortunate epoch in your life, Cool.

Cool. Your father would discharge me.

Young C. Cool, my dad is an old ass.

Cool. Retire to your own room, for Heaven's sake, Mr. Charles.

Young C. I'll do it for my own sake, (to Dazzle) I say, old fellow, just hold the door steady while I go in.

Daz. This way. Now, then! — take care!

**SD: Dazzle helps the staggering Young Courtley to exit.**

**SD: Enter Sir Harcourt Courtley, I. c, in an elegant dressing-gown, and Greek skull-cap and tassels, etc.**

Sir Harcourt. Cool, is breakfast ready ?

Cool, Quite ready, Sir Harcourt.

Sir H. Apropos. I omitted to mention that I expect Squire Harkaway to join us this morning, and you must prepare for my departure to Oak Hall immediately.

Cool. Leave town in the middle of the season, Sir Harcourt? So unprecedented a proceeding!

Sir H. It is ! I confess it ; there is but one power could effect such a miracle—that is divinity.

Cool. How ?

Sir H. In female form, of course. Cool, I am about to present society with a second Lady Courtley ; young — blushing eighteen ; lovely ! I have her portrait, rich! I have her banker's account —an heiress, and a Venus !

Cool. Lady Courtley could be none other.

Sir H. Ha! ha! Cool, your manners are above your station. Apropos, I shall find no further use for my brocade dressing-gown.

Cool. I thank you, Sir Harcourt. Might I ask who the fortunate lady is?

Sir H. Certainly; Miss Grace Harkaway, the niece of my old friend, Max.

Cool. Have you never seen the lady, sir?

Sir H. Never — that is, yes— eight years ago. Having been, as you know, on the continent for the last seven years, I have had no opportunity of paying my devoirs. Our connection and betrothal was a very extraordinary one. Her father's estates were contiguous to mine —being a penurious, miserly, *ugly* old scoundrel, he made a market of my indiscretion, and supplied my extravagance with large sums of money on mortgages, his great desire being to unite the two properties. About seven years ago he died —leaving Grace, a girl, to the guardianship of her uncle, with this will: — on attaining the age of nineteen, she would consent to marry me, I should receive those deeds, and all his property, as her dowry. If she refused to comply with this condition, they should revert to my heir, presumptive or apparent. She consents.

Cool. Who would not?

Sir H. I consent to receive her 15,000 pounds a year.

Cool. Who would not?

Sir H. So prepare. Cool, prepare; but where is my boy, where is Charles ?

Cool. Why-- oh, he is gone out, Sir Harcourt, yes, gone out to take a walk.

Sir H. Poor child! A perfect child in heart--a sober, placid mind-- the simplicity and verdure of boyhood, kept fresh and unsullied by any contact with society. Tell me. Cool, at what time was he in bed last night?

Cool. Half-past nine, Sir Harcourt.

Sir H. Half-past nine! Beautiful! What an original idea! Reposing in cherub slumbers, while all around him teems with drinking and debauchery! Primitive sweetness of nature! No pilot-coated, bear-skinned brawling!

Cool. Oh, Sir Harcourt!

Sir H. No cigar-smoking--

Cool. Faints at the smell of one.

Sir H. No brandy and water bibbing--

Cool. Doesn't know the taste of anything stronger than barley-water.

Sir H. No night parading--

Cool. Never heard the clock strike twelve, except at noon.

Sir H. In fact, he is my son, and became a gentleman by right of paternity — he inherited my manners.

**SD: Enter Martin**

Mar. Mr. Harkaway.

**SD: Enter Max Harkaway**

Max. Squire Harkaway, fellow, or Max Harkaway, another time.

**SD: Martin bows and exits.**

Ah ! ha ! Sir Harcourt, I'm devilish glad to see you! Gimme your fist—dang it, but I'm glad to see you! Let me see: six—seven years or more, since we have met. How quickly they have flown!

Sir H. (throwing off his studied manner). Max, Max! give me your hand, old boy. (aside) Ah ! he is glad to see me; there is no fawning pretence about that squeeze. Cool, you may retire.

**SD: Exit Cool**

Max. Why, you are looking quite rosy.

Sir H. Ah, ah ! rosy ! Am I too florid?

Max. Not a bit; not a bit.

Sir H. I thought so. (aside) Cool said I had put too much on.

Max. How comes it, Courtley, you manage to retain your youth ? See, I'm as gray as an old badger, or a wild rabbit ; while you are — are as black as a young rook. I say, whose head grew your hair, eh ?

Sir H. Permit me to remark, that all the beauties of my person are of home manufacture. Why should you be surprised at my youth ? I have scarcely thrown off the giddiness of a very boy— elasticity of limb —buoyancy of soul ! Remark this position, (*throws himself into an attitude*) I held that attitude for ten minutes at Lady Acid's last reunion, at the express desire of one of our first sculptors, while he was making a sketch of me for the Apollo.

Max (aside). Making a butt of thee for their gibes.

Sir H. Lady Sarah Sarcasm started up, and, pointing to my face, ejaculated, "Good gracious ! does not Sir Harcourt remind you of the countenance of Ajax, in the Pompeian portrait?"

Max. Ajax !— humbug!

Sir H. You are complimentary.

Max. I'm a plain man. and always speak my mind. What's in a face or figure ? Does a Grecian nose entail a good temper ? Does a waspish waist indicate a good heart? Or, do oily perfumed locks necessarily thatch a well-furnished brain?

Sir H. It's an undeniable fact, *plain* people always praise the beauties of the *mind*.

Max. Excuse the insinuation; I had thought the first Lady Courtley had surfeited you with beauty.

Sir H. No ; she lived fourteen months with me, and then eloped with an intimate friend. Etiquette compelled me to challenge the seducer; so I received satisfaction —and a bullet in my shoulder at the same time. However, I had the consolation of knowing that he was the handsomest man of the age. She did not insult me by running away with a damned ill-looking scoundrel.

Max. That, certainly, was flattering.

Sir H. I felt so, as I pocketed the ten thousand pounds damages.

Max. That must have been a great balm to your sore honor.

Sir H. It was — Max, my honor would have died without it; for on that year the wrong horse won the Derby — by some mistake. It was one of the luckiest chances —a thing that does not happen twice in a man's life—the opportunity of getting rid of his wife and his debts at the same time.

Max. Tell the truth, Courtley —Did you not feel a little frayed in your delicacy — your honor, now? Eh?

Sir H. Not a whit. Why should I? I married *money* and I received it—virgin gold ! My delicacy and honor had nothing to do with it. The world pities the bereaved husband, when it should congratulate. No; the affair made a sensation, and I was the object. Besides, it is vulgar to make a parade of one's feelings, however acute they may be ; impenetrability of countenance is the sure sign of your highly-bred man of fashion.

Max. So a man must, therefore, lose his wife and his money with a smile —in fact, everything he possesses but his temper.

Sir H. Exactly; and greet ruin with *vive la bagatelle*! For example; your modish beauty never discomposes the shape of her features with convulsive laughter. A smile rewards the *bon mot*, and also shows the whiteness of her teeth. Slie never weeps impromptu— tears might destroy the economy of her cheek. Scenes are vulgar, hysterics obsolete ; she exhibits a calm, placid, impenetrable lake, whose surface is reflection, but of unfathomable depth — a statue, whose life is hypothetical, and not a *prima facie* fact.

Max. Well, give me the girl that will fly at your eyes in an argument, and stick to her point like a fox to his own tail.

Sir H. But etiquette, Max ! Remember etiquette !

Max. Damn etiquette ! I have seen a man who thought it sacrilege to eat fish with a knife, that would not scruple to rise up and rob his brother of his birth-right in a gambling-house. Your thoroughbred, well-blooded heart will seldom kick over the traces of good feeling. That's my opinion, and I don't care who knows it.

Sir H. Pardon me — etiquette is the pulse of society, by regulating which the body politic is retained in health. I consider myself one of the faculty in the art.

Max, Well, well ; you are a living libel upon common sense, for you are old enough to know belter.

Sir H. Old enough ! What do you mean ? Old ! I still retain all my little juvenile indiscretions, which your niece's beauties must teach me to discard. I have not sown my wild oats yet.

Max. Time you did, at sixty-three. —

Sir H. Sixty-three ! Good Heavens ! Forty, 'pon my life ! Forty, next March.

Max. Why, you are older than I am.

Sir H. Oh ! You are old enough to be my father.

Max. Well, if I am, I am ; that's etiquette, I suppose. Poor Grace! How often have I pitied her fate ! That a young and beautiful creature should be driven into wretched splendor, or miserable poverty!

Sir H. Wretched ! wherefore ? Lady Courtley wretched ! Impossible !

Max. Will she not be compelled to marry you, whether she likes you or not ?—a choice between you and poverty. (aside) And hang me if it isn't a tie !

But why do you not introduce your son Charles to me ? I have not seen him since he was a child. You would never permit him to accept any of my invitations to spend his vacation at Oak Hall—of course, we shall have the pleasure of his company now.

Sib H. He is not fit to enter society yet. He is a studious, sober boy.

Max. Boy! Why, he's five-and-twenty.

Sir H. Good gracious ! Max —you will permit me to know my own son's age —he is not twenty?

Max. I'm dumb.

Sir H. You will excuse me while I indulge in the process of dressing. Cool ! Prepare my toilet. That is a ceremony which, with me, supersedes all others. I consider it a duty which every gentleman owes to society, to render himself as agreeable an object as possible; and the least compliment a mortal can pay to nature, when she honors him by bestowing extra care in the manufacture of his person, is to display her taste to the best possible advantage ; and so, au revoir.

**SD: He exits**

Max. That's a good soul. —he has his faults, and who has not? Forty years of age! Oh, monstrous!—but he does look uncommonly young for sixty, spite of his foreign locks and complexion.

**SD: Enter Dazzle**

Daz. Who's my friend with the stick and gaiters, I wonder — one of the family— the governor, maybe?

Max. Who's this ? Oh, Charles — is that you my boy ? How are you ? (aside) This is the boy.

Daz. (aside) He knows me—he is too respectable for a bailiff. (aloud) How are you ?

Max. Your father has just left me.

Daz. (aside) The devil he has ! He has been dead these ten years. Oh! I see, he thinks I'm young Courtley. (aloud) The honor you would confer upon me, I must unwillingly disclaim — I am not Mr. Courtley.

Max. I beg pardon — a friend, I suppose?

Daz. Oh, a most intimate friend — a friend of years — distantly related to the family —one of my ancestors married one of his. (aside) Adam and Eve.

Max. Are you on a visit here ?

Daz. Yes ; oh ! yes. (aside) Rather a short one, I'm afraid.

Max (aside). This appears a dashing kind of fellow—as he is a friend of Sir Harcourt's, I'll invite him to the wedding, (aloud) Sir, if you are not otherwise engaged, I shall feel honored by your company at my house, Oak Hall, Gloucestershire.

Daz, Your name is --

Max. Harkaway— Max Harkaway.

Daz, Harkaway — let me see — I ought to be related to the Harkaways, somehow.

Max. A wedding is about to come off— will you take a part on the occasion ?

Daz. With pleasure ! Any part but that of the husband.

Max. Have you any previous engagement I

Daz. I was thinking —eh? Why, let me see, (aside) Promised to meet my tailor and his account tomorrow ; however, I'll postpone that. (aloud) Have you good shooting ?

Max. Shooting ! Why, there's no shooting at this time of the year.

Daz Oh ! I'm in no hurry —I can wait till the season, of course, I was only speaking precautionally —you have good shooting ?

Max. The best in the country.

Daz. Make yourself comfortable ! Say no more — I'm your man — wait till you see how I'll murder your preserves.

Max. Do you hunt?

Daz. Pardon me — but will you repeat that ? (aside) Delicious and expensive idea!

Max. You ride ?

Daz. Anything ! Everything ! From a blood to a broomstick. Only catch me a flash of lightning, and let me get on the back of it and damn me if I wouldn't astonish the elements.

Max. Ha! ha!

Daz. I'd put a girdle round about the earth in very considerably less than forty minutes.

Max. Ah! Ha ! We'll show old Fiddlestrings how to spend the day. He imagines that Nature, at the earnest request of Fashion, made summer days long for him to saunter in the Park, and winter nights that lie might have good tune to get cleared out at hazard or at whist. Give me the yelping of pack of hounds before the shuffling of pack of cards. What state can match the chase in full cry, each vieing with his fellows which shall be most happy A thousand deaths fly by unheeded in that one hour's life of ecstasy. Time outrun, and Nature seems to grudge our bliss by making the day so short.

Daz. No, for there rises up the idol of my great adoration.

Max. Who's that ?

Daz. The bottle — that lends lustre to the soul — When the world puts on its night-cap, and extinguishes the sun — then comes the bottle! Oh, mighty wine ! Don't ask me to apostrophize. Wine and love are the only two indescribable things in nature but I prefer the wine, because its consequences are not entailed, and are more easily got rid of.

Max. How so?

Daz. Love ends in matrimony, wine in soda water.

Max. Well, I can promise you as fine a bottle as ever was cracked.

Daz. Never mind the bottle, give me the wine. Say no more but, when I arrive, just shake one of my hands, and put the key of the cellar into the other, and if I don't make myself intimately acquainted with its internal organization — well, I say nothing — time will show.

Max. I foresee some happy days.

Daz. And some glorious nights.

Max. It mustn't be a flying visit.

Daz. I despise the word — I'll stop a month with you.

Max. Or a year or two.

Daz. I'll live and die with you!

Max. Ha! ha! Remember Max Harkaway, Oak Hall, Gloucestershire.

Daz. I'll remember — fare ye well. I say, holloa!— Tallyho-o-o-o —

Max. Yoicks! Tallyhoa-o-o-o !

***SD: Max exits***

Daz. There I am — quartered for couple of years, at the least. The old boy wants somebody to ride his horses, shoot his game, and keep a restraint on the morals of the parish: I'm eligible. What lucky accident to meet Young Courtley last night! Who could have thought it? Yesterday, I could not make certain of a dinner, except at my own proper peril; to-day I would flirt with banquet.

***SD: Young Courtley enters***

Young C. What infernal row was that? Why, are you here still?

Daz. Yes. Ain't you delighted? I'll ring, and send the servant for my luggage.

Young C. The devil you will! Why, you don't mean to say you seriously intend to take up permanent residence here?

***SD: Courtley rings the bell.***

Daz Now, that's a most inhospitable insinuation.

Young C. Might I ask your name?

Daz. With deal of pleasure — Richard Dazzle, late of the Unattached Volunteers, vulgarly entitled the Dirty Buffs.

***SD: Enter Martin***

Young C. Then, Mr. Richard Dazzle, I have the honor of wishing you a very good morning. Martin, show this gentleman the door.

Daz. If he does, I'll kick Martin out of it. No offence.

**SD: Martin exits**

Now, sir, permit me to place a dioramic view of your conduct before you. After bringing you safely home this morning — after indulgently waiting, whenever you took a passing fancy to a knocker or bell-pull— after conducting a retreat that would have reflected honor on Napoleon — you would kick me into the street, like a mangy cur; and that's what you call gratitude.

Now, to show you how superior I am to petty malice, I give you an unlimited invitation to my house —my country house —to remain as long as you please.

Young C. Your house !

Daz. Oak Hall, Gloucestershire, fine old place ! For further particulars see road book—that is, it *nominally* belongs to my old friend and relation, Max Harkaway ; but I'm privileged. Capital old fellow —say, shall we be honored?

Young C. Sir, permit me to hesitate a moment, (aside) Let me see I go back to college tomorrow, so I shall not be missing, tradesmen begin to dun-

**SD: Cool enters**

I hear thunder; here is shelter ready for me.

Cool. Oh, Mr. Charles, Mr. Solomon Isaacs is in the hall, and swears he will remain till he has arrested you !

Young C. Does he !— sorry he is so obstinate — take him my compliments, and I will bet him five to one he will not.

Daz. Double or quits, with my kind regards.

Cool. But, sir, he has discovered the house in Curzon street ; he says he is aware the furniture at least belongs to you, and he will put a man in immediately.

Young C. That's awkward. What's to be done?

Daz. Ask him whether he couldn't make it a woman.

Young C. I must trust that to fate.

Daz. I will give you my acceptance, if it will be of any use to you — it is of none to me.

Young C. No, sir; but in reply to your most generous and kind invitation, if you be in earnest, I shall feel delighted to accept it.

Daz. Certainly.

Young C. Then off we go — through the stables — down the Mews, and so slip through my friend's fingers.

Daz. But, stay, you must do the polite ; say farewell to him before you part. Damn it, don't cut him!

Young C. You jest!

Daz. Here, lend me a card.

**SD: Courtley gives him one, he writes**

Now, then, "Our respects to Mr. Isaacs— sorry to have been prevented from seeing him." Ha ha!

Young C. Ha! ha!

Daz. We'll send him up some game.

Young C. (to Cool). Don't let my father see him.

**SD: Exit Young Courtley and Dazzle. Cool is left with the card, reads it.**

Cool. What's this? "Mr. Charles Courtley, PPC, returns thanks for obliging inquiries."

**SD: END OF ACT I**

## **ACT II, SEGMENT 1 - Oak Hall, Gloucestershire, the home of the Harkaways**

**SD: Pert enters**

Pert. How I do long to see what kind of a man Sir Harcourt Courtly is! They say he is sixty; so he must be old, and consequently ugly. If I was Miss Grace, I would rather give up all my fortune and marry the man I liked, than go to church with a stuffed eel-skin. But taste is everything, - she doesn't seem to care whether he is sixty or sixteen; jokes at love; prepares for matrimony as she would for dinner; says it is a necessary evil, and what can't be cured must be endured.

Now, I say this is against all nature; and she is either no woman, or a deeper one than I am, if she prefers an old man to a young one.

Here she comes ! looking as cheerfully as if she was going to marry Mr. Jenks ! My Mr. Jenks ! whom nobody won't lead to the halter till I have that honor.

**SD: Grace enters.**

Grace. Well, Pert! any signs of the squire yet?

Pert. No, Miss Grace.

Grace. In my uncle's letter he mentions a Mr. Dazzle, whom he has invited; so you must prepare a room for him. He is some friend of my husband that is to be, and my uncle seems to have taken an extraordinary predilection for him. Apropos ! I must not forget to have a bouquet for the dear old man when he arrives.

Pert. The dear old man ! Do you mean Sir Harcourt?

Grace. La, no! my uncle of course. What do I care for Sir Harcourt Courtley ?

Pert. Isn't it odd. Miss, you have never seen your intended, though it has been so long since you were betrothed?

Grace. Not at all ; marriage matters are conducted now-a-days, in a most mercantile manner ; consequently, a previous acquaintance is by no means indispensable. Besides, my prescribed husband has been upon the continent for the benefit of his—property ! They say a southern climate is a great restorer of consumptive estates.

Pert. Well, Miss, for my own part, I should like to have a good look at my bargain before I paid for it ; 'specially when one's life is the price of the article. But why, ma'am, do you consent to marry in this blind-man's-buff sort of manner? What would you think if he were not quite so old ?

Grace. I should think he was a little younger.

Pert. I should like him all the better.

Grace. That wouldn't I. A young husband might expect affection and nonsense, which 'twould be deceit in me to render ; nor would he permit me to remain with my uncle. Sir Harcourt takes me with the incumbrances on his estate, and I shall beg to be left among the rest of the live stock.

Pert. Ah, Miss! but some day you might chance to stumble over *the* man — what could you do then?

Grace. Do! beg *the* man's pardon, and request *the* man to pick me up again.

Pert. Ah ! you were never in love, Miss.

Grace. I never was, nor will be, till I am tired of myself and common sense. Love is a pleasant scape-goat for a little epidemic madness. I must have been inoculated in my infancy, for the infection passes over poor me in contempt.

***Charles and Dazzle arrive at Oak Hall. Charles immediately falls for Grace and begins courting her. To avoid detection by his father, Charles assumes the alias of “Augustus Hamilton” saying he just looks like “Charles Courtly.”***

## **ACT II, SEGMENT 2**

Grace. Perhaps you would follow you friend into the dining-room ; refreshment, after your long journey, must be requisite.

Young C. Pardon me. madam ; but the lovely garden and the loveliness before me, is better refreshment than I could procure in any dining-room.

Grace. Ha ! Your company and compliments arrive together.

Young C. I trust that passing remark will not spoil so welcome an introduction as this by offending you.

Grace. I am not certain that anything you could say would offend me.

Young C. I never meant--

Grace. I thought not. In turn, pardon me, when I request you will commence your visit with this piece of information : — I consider compliments impertinent, and sweetmeat language fulsome.

Young C. I would condemn my tongue to a Pythagorean silence, if I thought it could attempt to flatter.

Grace. It strikes me, sir, that you are a stray bee from the hive of fashion ; if so, reserve your honey for its proper cell. A truce to compliments. — You have just arrived *from town*, I apprehend.

Young C. This moment I left mighty London, under the fever of a full season, groaning with the noisy pulse of wealth and the giddy whirling brain of fashion. Enchanting, busy London ! How have i prevailed on myself to desert you ! Next week the new ballet comes out —the week after comes Ascot. Oh !

Grace. How agonizing must be the reflection !

Young C. Torture ! Can you inform me how you manage to avoid suicide here ? If there was but an opera, even, within twenty miles ! We couldn't get up a rustic ballet among the village girls ? No ?— ah!

Grace. I am afraid you would find that difficult. How I contrive to support life I don't know — it is wonderful — but I have not precisely contemplated suicide yet, nor do I miss the opera.

Young C. How can you manage to kill time ?

Grace. I can't. Men talk of killing time, while time quietly kills them. I have many employments —this week I devote to study and various amusements — next week to being married — the following week to repentance, perhaps.

Young C. Married !

Grace. You seem surprised; I believe it is of frequent occurrence in the metropolis — is it not?

Young C. Might I ask to whom ?

Grace. A gentleman who has been strongly recommended to me for the situation of husband.

Young C. What an extraordinary match ! Would you not consider it advisable to see him, previous to incurring the consequences of such an act ?

Grace. You must be aware that fashion says otherwise. The gentleman swears eternal devotion to the lady's fortune, and the lady swears she will outlive him still. My lord's horses and my lady's diamonds shine through a few seasons, until a seat in Parliament, or the continent stares them in the face ; then, when thrown upon each other for resources of comfort, they begin to quarrel about the original conditions of the sale.

Young C. Sale ! No ! that would be degrading civilization into Turkish barbarity.

Grace. Worse, sir, a great deal worse ; for there at least they do not attempt concealment of the barter; but here, every London ball-room is a marriage mart--young ladies are trotted out, while the mother, father, or chaperone plays auctioneer, and knocks them down to the highest bidder — young men are ticketed up with fortunes on their backs —and Love, turned into a dapper shopman, descants on the excellent qualities of the material.

Young C. Oh ! that such a custom could have ever emanated from the healthy soil of an English heart!

Grace. No; it never did — like most of our literary dandyisms and dandy literature, it was borrowed from the French.

Young C. You seem to laugh at love.

Grace. Love ! why, the very word is a breathing satire upon man's reason — a mania, indigenous to humanity — nature's jester, who plays off tricks upon the world, and trips up common sense. When I'm in love, I'll write an almanac, for the very lack of wit—prognosticate the sighing season— when to beware of tears — about this time expect matrimony to be prevalent ! Ha ! ha ! Why should I lay out my life in love's bonds upon the bare security of a man's word ?

**In the rest of Act 2, other characters arrive at Oak Hall. Mark Meddle, a lawyer, spars with Cool, the valet. Sir Harcourt and Grace get acquainted. Dazzle sponges off of everyone and everything, and he and Charles/Augustus make general nuisances of themselves.**

**ACT III, SEGMENT 1 - Oak Hall, like the rest of this play from here on out**

Max. (aside to Sir Harcourt). What can I do ?

Sir H. Get rid of them civilly.

Max. What, turn them out, after I particularly invited them to stay a month or two ?

Sir H. Why, they are disreputable characters; as for that young fellow, in whom my Lady Courtley appears so particularly absorbed — I am bewildered — I have written to town for my Charles, my boy — it certainly is the most extraordinary likeness--

Daz. Sir Harcourt, I have an idea

Sir H. Sir, I am delighted to hear it. (aside to Max) That fellow is a swindler.

Max I met him at your house.

Sir H. Never saw him before in all my life.

Daz. (crossing to Sir Harcourt). I will bet you five to one that I can beat you three out of four games of billiards, with one hand.

Sir H. No, sir.

Daz. I don't mind giving you ten points in fifty.

Sir H. Sir, I never gamble.

Daz. You don't! Well, I'll teach you—easiest thing in life—you have every requisite— good temper.

Max. Here, all of you — look, here is Lady Gay Spanker coming across the lawn at a hard gallop!

***SD: Courtly runs to the window***

Sir H. Bless me, the horse is running away!

Max. Look how she takes that fence! There's a seat.

Sir H. Lady Gay Spanker — who may she be?

Grace. Gay Spanker, Sir Harcourt? My cousin and dearest friend-- you *must* like her.

Sir H. It will be my devoir, since it is your wish--though it will be hard task in your presence.

Grace. I am sure she will like you.

Young C. Who, and what is she?

Grace. Glee, glee, made a living thing--Nature, in some frolic mood, shut up a merry devil in her eye, and, spiting Art, stole Joy's brightest harmony to thrill her laugh, which peals out sorrow's knell. Her cry rings loudest in the field—the very echo loves best, and as each hill attempts to ape her voice, Earth seems to laugh that it made a thing so glad.

Max. Ay, the merriest minx I ever kissed.

Lady Gay. (Laughs) Max!

Max. Come in, you mischievous puss.

**SD: James enters**

James. Mr. Adolphus and Lady Gay Spanker.

**SD: James exits. Lady Gay enters, fully equipped in riding habit**

Lady G. Ha! Ha! Well, governor, how are ye? I have been down five times, climbing up your stairs in my long clothes. How are you, Grace, dear? There, don't fidget, Max. There's one for you.

**SD: She kisses Grace, then Max**

Sir H. Ahem !

Lady G. Oh, gracious, I didn't see you had visitors.

Max. Permit me to introduce —Sir Harcourt Courtley, Lady Gay Spanker. Mr. Dazzle, Mr. Hamilton — Lady Gay Spanker.

Sir H. (aside). A devilish fine woman !

Daz (aside to Sir Harcourt). She's a devilish fine woman.

Lady G. You mustn't think anything of the liberties I take with my old papa here — bless him!

Sir H. Oh, no ! (aside) I only thought I should like to be in his place.

Lady G. I am so glad you have come, Sir Harcourt. Now we shall be able to make a decent figure at the heels of a hunt.

Sir H. Does your ladyship hunt ?

Lady G. Ha! I say, governor, does my ladyship hunt? I rather flatter myself that I do hunt! Why, Sir Harcourt, one might as well live without laughing as without hunting. Man was fashioned expressly to fit a horse. Are not hedges and ditches created for leaps? Of course! And I look upon foxes to be one of the most blessed dispensations of a benign Providence.

Sir H. Yes, it is all very well in the abstract; I tried it once.

Lady G. Once! Only once?

Sir H. Once, only once. And then the animal ran away with me.

Lady G. Wiii, you would not have him walk ?

Sir H. Finding my society disagreeable, he instituted a series of kicks, with a view of removing the annoyance ; but aided by the united stays of the mane and tail, I frustrated his intentions ALL. (laughter)

Sir H. His next resource, however, was more effectual, for he succeeded in rubbing me off against a tree.

Max and Lady G. Ha! Ha! Ha!

Daz. How absurd you must have looked with your legs and arms in the air. like a shipwrecked tea table.

Sir H. Sir, I never looked absurd in my life. Ah, it may be very amusing in relation, I dare say, but very unpleasant in effect.

Lady G. I pity you. Sir Harcourt ; it was criminal in your parents to neglect your education so shamefully.

Sir H. Possibly ; but be assured, I shall never break my neck awkwardly from a horse, when it might be accomplished with less trouble from a bedroom window.

Young C. (aside). My dad will be caught by this she Bucephalus-tamer.

Max. Ah ! Sir Harcourt, had you been here a month ago, you would have witnessed the most glorious run that ever swept over merry England's green cheek — a steeple-chase, sir, which I intended to win, but my horse broke down the day before. I had a chance, notwithstanding, and but for Gay here, I should have won. How I regretted my absence from it ! How did my filly behave herself, Gay ?

Lady G. Gloriously, Max! gloriously! There were sixty horses in the field, all mettle to the bone; the start was a picture —away we went in a cloud — pell-mell — helter-skelter — the fools first, as usual, using themselves up — we soon passed them — first your Kitty, then my Blueskin, and Craven's colt last. Then came the tug —Kitty skimmed the walls — Blueskin flew over the fences — the colt neck-and-neck, and half a mile to run —at last the colt baulked a leap and went wild. Kitty and I had it all to ourselves —she was three lengths ahead as we breasted the last wall, six feet, if an inch, and a ditch on the other side. Now, for the first time, I gave Blueskin his head — ha! ha! Away he flew like a thunderbolt —overwent the filly —I over the same spot, leaving Kitty in the ditch — walked the steeple, eight miles in thirty minutes, and scarcely turned a hair.

All. Bravo! Bravo!

Lady G. Do you hunt ?

Daz. Hunt ! I belong to a hunting family. I was born on horseback and cradled in a kennel !

Ay, and I hope I may die with a whoo-whoop !

Max {to Sir Harcourt). You must leave your town habits in the smoke of London ; here we rise with the lark.

Sir H. Haven't the remotest conception when that period is.

Grace. The man that misses sunrise loses the sweetest part of his existence.

Sir H. Oh, pardon me ; I have seen sunrise frequently after a ball, or from the windows of my travelling carriage, and I always considered it disagreeable.

Grace. I love to watch the first tear that glistens in the opening eye of morning, the silent song the flowers breathe, the thrilling choir of the woodland minstrels, to which the modest brook trickles applause: these swelling out the sweetest chord of sweet creation's matins, seem to pour some soft and merry tale into the daylight's ear, as if the waking world had dreamed a happy thing, and now smiled o'er the telling of it.

Sir H. The effect of a rustic education ! Who could ever discover music in a damp foggy morning, except those confounded waits, who never play in tune, and a miserable wretch who makes a point of crying coffee under my window just as I am persuading myself to sleep: in fact, I never heard any music worth listening to, except in Italy.

Lady G. No? then you never heard a well-trained English pack in full cry?

Sir H. Full cry!

Lady G. Ay ! there is harmony, if you will. Give me the trumpet- neigh ; the spotted pack just catching scent. What a chorus is their yelp ! The view-hallo, blent with a peal of free and fearless mirth ! That's our old English music —match it where you can.

Sir H. (aside). I must see about Lady Gay Spanker.

Daz, (aside to Sir Harcourt). Ah, would you--

Lady G. Time then appears as young as love, and plumes as swift a wing. Away we go ! The earth flies back to aid our course ! Horse, man, hound, earth, heaven!—all—all—one piece of glowing ecstasy! Then I love the world myself, and every living thing—my jocund soul cries out for very glee, as it could wish that all creation had but one mouth, that I might kiss it!

Sir H. (aside). I wish I were the mouth !

Max. Why, we will regenerate you, Baronet! But Gay, where is your husband? Where is Adolphus?

Lady G. Bless me, where is my Dolly ?

Sir H. You are married, then ?

Lady G. I have a husband somewhere, though I can't find him just now. Dolly, dear ! (aside to Max) Governor, at home I always whistle when I want him.

**SD: Spanker enters**

Spanker. Here I am— did you call me, Gay ?

Sir H. (eyeing him). Is that your husband ?

Lady G. (aside). Yes, bless his stupid face, that's my Dolly.

Max. Permit me to introduce you to Sir Harcourt Courtley.

Span. (appears frightened) How d'ye do? I — ah!-um!

Lady G. (prompting him) Delighted to have the honor of making the acquaintance of a gentleman so highly celebrated in the world of fashion.

Span. Oh, yes, delighted, I'm sure — quite — very, so delighted— delighted !

**SD: Spanker is very confused, struggles to put on a glove, tearing it.**

Lady G. Where have you been, Dolly?

Span. Oh, ah, I was just outside.

Max. Why did you not come in?

Span. I'm sure I didn't — I don't exactly know, but I thought as — perhaps—I can't remember.

Daz. Shall we have the pleasure of your company to dinner ?

Span. I always dine — usually — that is, unless Gay remains--

Lady G. Stay dinner, of course ; we came on purpose to stop three or four days with you.

Grace. Will you excuse my absence, Gay ?

Max. What! what! Where are you going ? What takes you away ?

Grace. We must postpone the dinner till Gay is dressed.

Max. Oh, never mind, — stay where you are.

Grace. No, I must go.

Max. I say you shan't! I will be king in my own house.

Grace. Do, my dear uncle ;—you shall be king, and I'll be your prime minister, — that I'll rule, and you shall have the honor of taking the consequences.

Lady G. Well said, Grace. Have your own way, it is the only thing we women ought to be allowed.

***SD: From here, some plotful things happen involving outstanding debts but nothing really essential to this workshop edit. The romance between Charles aka Augustus and Grace continues to simmer.***

### **ACT III, SEGMENT 2**

***SD: Enter Young Charles***

Young C. Things are approaching to a climax; — but I must first ascertain what are the real sentiments of this riddle of a woman. Does she love me ? I flatter myself — by Jove here she comes — I shall never have such an opportunity again!

***SD: Enter Grace***

Grace. I wish I had never seen Mr. Hamilton. Why does every object appear robbed of the charm it once presented to me? Why do I shudder at the contemplation of this marriage, which, till now, was to me a subject of indifference? Am I in love ? In love! if I am, my past life has been the work of raising up a pedestal to place my own folly on — I — the infidel — the railer !

Young C. Meditating on matrimony, madam ?

Grace (aside). He little thinks he was the subject of my meditations ! {aloud} No.

Young C. {aside}. I must unmask my battery now.

Grace {aside}. How foolish I am—he will perceive that I tremble — I must appear at ease. *(slight awkward pause)*

Young C. Eh! ah! um!

Grace. Ah! *(Another slight awkward pause. Aside)* How very awkward !

Young C. {aside}. It is a very difficult subject to begin, (aloud) Madam —ahem —there was—is—I mean —I was about to remark—a— {aside} Hang me if it is not a very slippery subject. I must brush up my faculties; attack her in her own way. {aloud} Sing! oh, muse! {aside} Why, I have made love before to a hundred women !

Grace {aside}. I wish I had something to do, for I have nothing to say.

Young C. Madam — there is--a subject so fraught with fate to my future life, that you must pardon my lack of delicacy should a too hasty expression mar the fervent courtesy of its intent. To you, I feel aware, I must appear in the light of a comparative stranger.

Grace {aside}. I know what's coming.

Young C. Of you — I know perhaps too much for my own peace.

Grace (aside). He is in love.

Young C. I forget all that befell before I saw your beauteous self; I seem born into another world — my nature changed — the beams of that bright face falling on my soul, have, from its chaos, warmed into life the flowrets of affection, whose maiden odors now float toward the

sun, pouring forth on their pure tongue a mite of adoration, midst the voices of a universe.

(aside) That's something in her own style.

Grace. Mr. Hamilton !

Young C. You cannot feel surprised.

Grace. I am more than surprised. (aside) I am delighted.

Young C. Do not speak so coldly.

Grace. You have offended me.

Young C. No, madam ; no woman, whatever her state, can be offended by the adoration even of the meanest ; it is myself whom I have offended and deceived — but still I ask your pardon.

Grace (aside). Oh! he thinks I am refusing him. (aloud) I am not exactly offended, but--

Young C. Consider my position — a few days— and an insurmountable barrier would have placed you beyond ray wildest hopes — you would have been my mother.

Grack. I should have been your mother! (aside) I thought so.

Young C. No — that is. I meant Sir Harcourt Courtley's bride.

Grace (with great emphasis). Never!

Young C. How ! never! may I then hope?—you turn away — you would not lacerate me by a refusal ?

Grace (aside). How stupid he is!

Young C. Still silent ! I thank you. Miss Grace — I ought to have expected this — fool that I have been — one course alone remains — farewell !

Grace (aside). Now he's going.

Young C. Farewell forever !

***SD: Young Charles sits***

Will you not speak one word? I shall leave this house immediately — I shall not see you again.

Grace. (instructing him) Unhand me, sir, I insist.

Young C. (aside). Oh ! what an ass I've been!

***SD: He rushes to her and seizes her hand, kissing it***

Release this hand ? Never ! never ! Never will I quit this hand ! it shall be my companion in misery — in solitude — when you are far away.

Grace. Oh ! should any one come!

***SD: She drops her handkerchief; he stoops to pick it up***

For Heaven's sake do not kneel.

***SD: He kneels anyway***

Young C. Forever thus prostrate, before my soul's saint, I will lead a pious life of eternal adoration.

Grace. Should we be discovered thus — pray, Mr, Hamilton— pray — pray.

Young C. Pray ! I am praying ; what more can I do ?

Grace. Your conduct is shameful.

Young C. It is.

**SD: He rises**

Grace. And if I do not scream, is it not for your sake —that —but it might alarm the family.

Young C. It might — it would. Say. am I wholly indifferent to you ? I entreat one word — I implore you — do not withdraw your hand,

**SD: She snatches it away —he puts his arm around her waist**

You smile.

Grace. Leave me, dear Mr, Hamilton !

Young C, Dear ! Then I am dear to you ; that word once more ; say--say you love me !

Grace. Is this fair ?

**SD: He catches her in his arms and kisses her. Lady Gay Spanker enters.**

Lady G. Ha! oh!

Grace. Gay! Destruction!

**SD: Grace exits**

Young C. Fizzig ! The devil !

Lady G. Don t mind me—pray, don't let me be any interruption !

Young C. I was just--

Lady G. Yes, I see you were.

Young C. Oh ! madam, how could you mar my bliss in the very ecstasy of its fulfillment?

Lady G. I always like to be in at the death. Never drop you ears ; bless you, she is only a little fresh—give her her head, and she will outrun herself.

Young C. Possibly ; but what am I to do ?

Lady G. Keep your seat.

Young C But in a few days she will take a leap that must throw me--she marries Sir Harcourt Courtley.

Lady G. Why. that is awkward, certainly ; but you can challenge him, and shoot him.

Young C. Unfortunately that is out of the question.

Lady G. How so ?

Young C. You will not betray a secret, if I inform you ?

Lady G. All right — what is it!

Young C. I am his son.

Lady G. What—his son ? But he does not know you ?

Young C. No ; I met him here by chance, and faced it out, I never saw him before in my life.

Lady G. Beautiful! I see it all— you're in love with your mother that should be — your wife, that will be.

Young C. Now, I think I could distance the old gentleman, if you will but lend us your assistance.

Lady G. I will in anything.

Young C. You must know, then, that my father, Sir Harcourt, has fallen desperately \n love with you.

Lady G. With me ! (a scream of delight) That is delicious !

Young C. Now, if you only could--

Lady G. Could !—I will. Ha ! ha ! I see my cue. I'll cross his scent — I'll draw him after me.

Ho! ho! won't I make love to him ? Ha!

Young C. The only objection might be Mr. Spanker who might--

Lady G. No, he mightn't, he has no objection. Bless him, he's an inestimable little character —you don't know him as well as I do. I dare say— ha ! ha !

**SD: The dinner bell rings**

Here they come to dinner. I'll commence my operations on your governor immediately. Ha ! ha ! how I shall enjoy it.

**SD: From here, Lady Gay Spanker leads Sir Harcourt on. The lawyer, Meddle, becomes suspicious and sees an opportunity to earn a large fee.**

#### ACT IV

**SD: Meddle enters**

Med. Well, if that is not Mr. Hamilton, scratch me out with a big blade, for I am a blot—a mistake upon the rolls. There is an error in the pleadings somewhere, and I will discover it. I would swear to his identity before the most discriminating jury. By the bye, this accident will form a capital excuse for my presence here. I just stepped in to see how matters worked, and--stay —here comes the bridegroom elect—and, oh ! in his very arms, Lady Gay Spanker! Where are my witnesses ? Oh, that some one else were here ! However I can retire and get some information, eh — Spanker versus Courtley — damages —witness—

**SD: Meddle hides in the room and listens in to the love talk of Sir H and Lady Gay**

Sir H. Speak, adored, dearest Lady Gay !—speak—will you fly from the tyranny, the wretched misery of such a monster's roof, and accept the soul which lives but in your presence !

Lady G. Do not press me. Oh, spare a weak, yielding woman —be contented to know that you are, alas ! too dear to me. But the world — the world would say

Sir H. Let us be a precedent to open a more extended and liberal view of matrimonial advantages to society.

Lady G. How irresistible is your argument ! Oh ! pause ! Leave me ; I feel I cannot withstand your powers of persuasion. Swear that you will never forsake me. —

Sir H. Dictate the oath. May I grow wrinkled--may two inches be added to the circumference of my waist—may I lose the fall in my back—may I be old and ugly the instant I forego one tithe of adoration!

Lady G I must believe you.

Sir H. Shall we leave this detestable spot — this horrible vicinity?

**SD: He kisses her hand**

Lady G. The sooner the better ; to-morrow evening let it be. Now let me return; my absence will be remarked. Do I appear confused? Has my agitation rendered me unfit to enter the room?

Sir H. More angelic by a lovely tinge of heightened color.

Lady G. Tomorrow, in this room, which opens on the lawn.

Sir H. At eleven o'clock.

Lady G. Have your carriage in waiting, and four horses. Remember, please be particular to have four ; don't let the affair come off shabbily. Adieu, dear Sir Harcourt!

**SD: *She exits***

Sir H. Veni, vidi, vici ! Hannibal, Caesar, Napoleon, Alexander never completed so fair a conquest in so short a time. She dropped fascinated. This is an unprecedented example of the irresistible force of personal appearance combined with polished address. Poor creature ! how she loves me ! I pity so prostrating a passion, and ought to return it. I will ; it is a duty I owe to society and fashion.

**SD: *He exits. Meddle emerges from hiding***

Med. There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune." This is my tide — I am the only witness. "Virtue is sure to find its own reward." But I've no time to contemplate what I shall be — something huge. Let me see— Spanker versus Courtley — Damages placed at one hundred fifty thousand pounds at least, for juries always decimate your hopes.

**SD: *Spanker enters***

Span. I cannot find Gay anywhere.

Med. The plaintiff himself — I must commence the action. Mr. Spanker, as I have information of deep vital importance to impart, will you take a seat ?

**SD: *They sit solemnly. Meddle takes out a note-hook and pencil***

Ahem ! You have a wife ?

**SD: *Re-enter Lady Gay behind them, eavesdropping***

Span. Yes, I believe I--

Med. Will you be kind enough, without any prevarication, to answer my questions ?

Span. You alarm — I--

Med. Compose yourself and reserve your feelings ; take time to consider. You have a wife 1

Span. Yes —

Med. He has a wife-- good-- a bona-fide wife-- bound morally and legally to be your wife, and nobody else's in effect, except on your written permission--

Span. But what has this--

Med. Hush ! allow me, my dear sir, to congratulate you.

Span. What for ?

Med. Lady Gay Spanker is about to dishonor the bond of wedlock by eloping from you.

Span. (darting). What?

Med. Be patient — I thought you would be overjoyed. Place the affair in my hands, and I will venture to promise the largest damages on record.

Span. Damn the damages!—I want my wife. Oil, I'll go and ask her not to run away. She may run away with me — she may hunt — she may ride— anything she likes. Oh, sir, let us put a stop to this affair.

Med. Put a stop to it! do not alarm me, sir. Sir, you will spoil the most exquisite brief that was ever penned. It must proceed — it shall proceed. It is illegal to prevent it and I will bring an action against you for wilful intent to injure the profession.

Span. Oh, what an ass I am! Oh, have driven her to this. It was all that damned brandy punch on the top of Burgundy. What fool I was!

Med. It was the happiest moment of your life.

Span. So I thought at the time; but we live to grow wiser. Tell me, who is this vile seducer?

Med. Sir Harcourt Courtley.

Span. Ha! He is my best friend.

Med. I should think he is. If you will accompany me — here is a verbatim copy of the whole transaction in short-hand —sworn to by me.

Span. Only let me have Gay back again.

Med. Even that may be arranged — this way.

Span. That ever should live to see my wife run away. Oh, I will do anything — keep two packs of hounds — buy up every horse and ass in England — myself included — oh !

**SD: Exit Spanker and Meddle**

Lady G. Ha ha ha! Poor Dolly! I'm sorry must continue to deceive him. If he would kindle up a little. So, that fellow over heard all — well, so much the better.

**SD: Enter Young Courtley**

Young C. My dear madam, how fares the plot? Does my governor nibble?

Lady G. Nibble! He is caught and in the basket. I have just left him with a hook in his gills, panting for very lack of element. But how goes on your encounter?

Young C. Bravely. By simple ruse, I have discovered that she loves me. I see but one chance against the best termination I could hope.

Lady G. What is that?

Young C. My father has told me that I return to town again tomorrow afternoon.

Lady G. Well, I insist you stop and dine—keep out of the way.

Young C. Oh, but what excuse shall I offer for disobedience? What can say when he sees me before dinner?

Lady G. Say — say Grace.

**SD: Grace enters, hiding**

Young C. Ha ha!

Lady G. I have arranged to elope with Sir Harcourt myself tomorrow night.

Young C. The deuce you have!

Lady G. Now you could persuade Grace to follow that example— his carriage will be waiting at the Park — be there little before eleven, and will just prevent our escape. Can you make her agree to that?

Young C. Oh, without the slightest difficulty, if Mr. Augustus Hamilton supplicates.

Lady G. Success attend you.

Young C. I will bend the haughty Grace

Lady G. Do.

**SD: Young Charles and Lady Gay exit**

Grace. Will you?

## ACT V

***Sir Harcourt realises he has been duped and resolves to release Grace from their marriage contract. Max prevents the duel and Grace insists on going through with the marriage as a ruse to force Charles's hand. Charles' creditors arrive, demanding payment in full. The "true lovers" all reconcile, with Lady Gay recommitting to Dolly, and Grace resolving to marry Charles and cover the family debts.***

Sir H. So, sir, it appears you have been leading, covertly, an infernal town life ?

Young C. (imitating a sniveling servant) Yes, please, father.

Sir H. None of your humbug, sir ! (aside) He is my own son--how could I expect him to keep out of the fire ? (aloud) And you, Mr. Cool !—have you been deceiving me ?

Cool. Oh ! Sir Harcourt, if *your* perception was played upon, how could I be expected to see ?

Sir H. Well, it would be useless to withhold my hand. There, boy !

***SD: He gives his hand to Young Courtley. Grace comes down on the other side and offers her hand, he takes it***

What is all this ? What do you want?

Young C. Your blessing, father.

Grace. If you please, father.

Sir H. Oho ! the mystery is being solved. So, so, you young scoundrel, you have been making love —under the rose.

Lady G. He learnt that from you, Sir Harcourt.

Sir H. Ahem! What would you do now, if I were to withhold my consent ?

Grace. Do without it.

Max. The will says, if Grace marries any one but you, her property reverts to your heir-apparent —and there he stands.

Lady G. Make a virtue of necessity.

Span. I married from inclination, and see how happy I am. And if ever I have a son--

Lady G. Hush! Dolly, dear!

Sir H. Well ! take her, boy ! Although you are too young to marry.

Lady G. Am I forgiven, Sir Harcourt ?

Sir H. Ahem ! Why — a—{aside) Have you really deceived me ?

Lady G. Can you not see through this?

Sir H. And you still love me ?

Lady G. As much as I ever did.

**SD: *Sir Harcourt is about to kiss her hand, when Spanker interposes between***

Sir H. A very handsome ring indeed.

Span. Very.

**SD: *Spanker takes Lady Gay's arm and they go up***

Sir H. Poor little Spanker !

Max. (aside to Sir Harcourt). One point I wish to have settled. Who is Mr. Dazzle?

Sir H. A relative of the Spankers, he told me.

Max. Oh, no, a near connection of yours.

Sir H. Never saw him before I came down here, in all my life. Charles, who is Mr. Dazzle?

Young C. Dazzle, Dazzle — will you excuse an impertinent question ? —but who the deuce are you ?

Daz. Certainly ; I have not the remotest idea.

All. How, sir ?

Daz. Simple question as you may think it. it would puzzle half the world to answer. One thing I can vouch— Nature made me a gentle- man —that is, I live on the best that can be procured for credit. I never spend my own money when I can oblige a friend. I'm always thick on the winning horse. I'm an epidemic on the trade of tailor. For further particulars inquire of any sitting magistrate.

Sm H. And these are the deeds which attest your title to the name of gentleman ? I perceive you have caught the infection of the present age. Charles, permit me, as your father, and you, sir, as his friend, to correct you on one point. Barefaced assurance is the vulgar substitute for gentlemanly ease ; and there are many, who, by aping the vices of the great, imagine that they elevate themselves to the rank of those, whose faults alone they copy. No, sir ! The title of gentleman is the only one out of any monarch's gift, yet within the reach of every peasant. It should be engrossed by Truth — stamped with Honor — sealed with good-feeling — signed Man — and enrolled in every true young English heart.

**END OF PLAY**

**FURTHER NOTES AND BACKGROUND FROM THE SCRIPT (with many OCR errors, sorry)**

Those who attend a performance of " London Assurance " at the present day, will scarcely realize it as being an accurate photograph of the current "outside" ways and manners of Londoners between the years 1835 to 1840. Those times when the late eccentric Marquis of Waterford ruled supreme as chief spirit of all the follies of the day.

Charles Courtley, a young man of fashion, and a collegian on vacation— (those who have read " Tom Brown at Oxford " will readily understand the character)— has been on a "spree." He has picked up—or rather has been picked up by a quondam acquaintance— one Dazzle, whom he has no recollection of having seen before, and probably never had. Mr. Dazzle is a man about town. He cuts a respectable appearance, and having no apparent means of living, manages to make an apparently respectable living— without means. Everybody seems to tolerate him, but no one knows who he is, or where he came from. Dazzle is— Dazzle, who having with much trouble and ingenuity managed to entice Charles Courtley home at about half-past nine in the morning, much to the discontent of the sleepy servants, who have been waiting up all night for him, to hide his indiscretions from his father, before that venerable dandy, who is undoubtedly the fashionable scoundrel of the play, shall have rung the bell for his morning chocolate. Not that they are at all pleased to find him brought home in so very dilapidated condition by a stranger, or to see him produce broken knockers and bell-handles from his pockets as trophies of success. But as there is no time to lose, they, with the assistance of Dazzle, manage to get him to bed before the entrance of Sir Harcourt ; who, whatever he may be himself, holds firm conviction in the strict morality of his .-on.

Sir Harcourt Courtley, though now over sixty, still imagines himself a young man, and a handsome one at that. A spendthrift in his youth, he has been the victim of an old friend, a Mr. Harkaway, who advanced him heavy sums of money, taking as security mortgages on the Courtley property. To use his own words, " being a penurious, miserly, ugly old scoundrel, he made a market of my indiscretion, and supplied my extravagance with large sums of money on mortgages, his great desire being to unite the two properties. About seven years ago he died, leaving Grace, his daughter, to the guardianship of her uncle, with this will : If on attaining the age of nineteen she would consent to marry me, I should receive those deeds and all his property as her dowry. If she refused to comply with this condition, they should revert to my heir, presumptive or apparent. She consents. I consent to receive her £15,000 a year."

Thus we see him, with almost one foot in the grave, preparing to commit matrimony, although he has never seen the lady since her childhood, having lived on the Continent seven years previous to the opening of the play. While so engaged he is visited by Squire Max Harkaway, Grace's uncle and guardian, a bluff, hearty, honest fox hunter, who thinks more of a brisk chase than of all the fashionable follies of the day put together. He is opposed to the match, but has no power to prevent it ; and it is finally agreed that they shall

go down to Max's seat in Gloucester-shire, together, in order that Sir Harcourt may be introduced to Grace. Sir Harcourt retires to prepare his toilet (a ceremony which with him supersedes all others), leaving Harkaway to await his return. While so doing he encounters Dazzle, who has managed to get Charles to lie down. Taken by his off-hand manner, and presuming, from finding him making so free in the house, that he must be an intimate friend of the family, Max cordially invites Dazzle to join the party at Oak Hall. Dazzle of course accepts at once. It would be against his interest to refuse. Sir Harcourt and Squire Harkaway depart for Gloucester-shire, and later in the day, Charles, having slept off the effects of his last night's

debauch, and finding Dazzle making himself quite at home, orders the servants to show him the door. But Dazzle won't go. He has once got his foot in the Courtley mansion, and means to keep it there. He reproaches Charles with ingratitude, and to show that he is above petty malice, he in the coolest manner actually invites him down to his country house, "Oak Hall, Gloucestershire." Charles, who has been kept at school or college all his life, knows nothing of the Harkaways, and as he is beset by duns and sheriff's officers, he, to avoid one of the most persistent, a Mr. Solomon Isaacs, who is then waiting in the hall for him, jumps at the chance, and off they go, (leaping through the stables, on their journey to Gloucestershire.

The second Act opens at the house and grounds of Squire Harkaway, Grace is momentarily expecting the return of her uncle, accompanied by Sir Harcourt. She is a country girl, who has never seen the world, never had an affaire de com; knows nothing of love, has no objection to marry a man she has never seen, and who is nearly old enough to be her grandfather, and looks on marriage as a mere mercantile transaction. We are here introduced to a personage who is mixed up with all the other characters of the piece to a considerable extent during the rest of the action, one Mr. Mark Meddle, a pettifogging country lawyer, who is always poking his nose into other people's business, in hope of obtaining a fee. He has just discovered the news of the approaching wedding through the columns of the village newspaper, and is fishing for spoils. To draw up the marriage contract would be the acme of professional bliss, and he has called at the Hall to pump the servants, but they are not to be pumped. Dazzle and Charles have just arrived, and Dazzle meeting Meddle on the lawn, mistakes him for one of the family, and immediately begins to cultivate his acquaintance. Meddle, nothing loath, reciprocates, and they are getting on remarkably well, when Charles, who while walking through the grounds has caught a glimpse of Grace and fallen desperately in love at first sight, enters, and is immediately introduced to the lawyer by Dazzle, as his very old friend, Mr. Meddle, while he introduces Charles as "Mr. Augustus Hamilton." Dazzle having discovered Grace's name, hurries off to introduce himself, when a comical scene ensues between Meddle and young Courtley.

Meddle, afterwards seeing the future Lady Courtley and "Mr. Augustus Hamilton" in close conversation, hides behind a tree to take notes in the event of a future "Crim. Con." case. Charles, who is likewise only known to Grace by the name of Hamilton, enters into a

desperate flirtation with her, when he discovers that she is about to be married—but not to whom? They are interrupted by a servant announcing the return of Max Harkaway, accompanied by an unknown gentleman, whom Grace hastens to greet as her future husband. Charles, anxious to find out whether there is any truth in Grace's statement, as also the name of the bridegroom, consults Meddle, but that wily gentleman can impart no intelligence without a heavy fee. Baffled here, he hastens to call on Dazzle to assist him. Meanwhile Grace has been introduced to Sir Harcourt, and Dazzle has been welcomed by Max, to whom he has introduced Charles as his particular friend, "Augustus Hamilton." And now comes one of the strongest situations in the play, the meeting between father and son, and the denial of his father's identity by that son.

Max, in his bluff country hospitality, hastens to introduce the two young men to Sir Harcourt Courtley, who of course, with the greatest possible surprise, instantly recognizes his own offspring, although the old gentleman is considerably ashamed of having to own to so old a son. Charles, in his confusion, by advice of Dazzle, denies being Charles Courtley—or even knowing such a person. Sir Harcourt, in amazement, calls on his valet Cool as a witness. But this personage, true to his name, as coolly denies his young master, "No, sir; it is not Mr. Charles—but it is very like him!" A short dispute follows, urged on by Meddle, who would like to be retained for an action, when luncheon is announced—that great pacificator of angry passion—and all retire save Meddle and Cool, who have a very funny little interview, which terminates the Act.

A lapse of two days has taken place between the second and third Acts, and we find the parties seated in Max Harkaway's drawing-room, Grace and Charles being engaged in a game of chess. Sir Harcourt is full of angry suspicion. He looks on Charles and Dazzle as a pair of swindlers, and has written up to London ordering his son's instant appearance at Oak Hall. The cool, impudent manner in which Dazzle treats the baronet, is fanning a flame in the breast of the haughty old coxcomb, that is not a little heightened by the evident flirtation amounting to love passages that are still being kept up between Charles and Sir Harcourt's intended bride, when Mr. Adolphus and Lady Gay Spanker appear on the scene. Lady Gay Spanker! Who and what is she? "Glee! glee! made a living thing! Nature in some frolic mood, shut up a merry devil in her eye, and spiting Art stole Joy's bright hannony to thrill her laugh, which peals out sorrow's knell. Her cry rings loudest in the field—the very echo loves it best, and as each hill attempts to ape her voice, earth seems to laugh that it made a thing so glad."

Lady Gay is an Earl's daughter. As Max Harkaway very tersely puts it, "she married Dolly for freedom, he—her for protection, and he has it!" In fact Dolly is an eccentric little gentleman, and as may well be supposed, of means. He is little better than a fool, but very fond of his "field sport" loving wife. Nevertheless, he is a gentleman, which some actors of the part have forgotten to perceive. He is exceedingly nervous, depending on his wife for advice in everything. He is even afraid to enter the room at the same time that his wife rushes in brimful of youthful spirits, fresh and blooming from her morning ride over the stone fences of

Gloucestershire, and ready to devour her dear cousin Grace and her " dear old papa," as she calls Max, with kisses. The baronet, who is smitten at once, to the evident amazement of Dazzle, who now remains a quiet looker-on, wonders (after Lady Gay has laughingly refused his escort to Grace's apartments, where she will dress for dinner, and has run off to them alone), how it was possible that "Dolly ever summoned courage to propose." "Bless you, he never did," returns Harkaway. " She proposed to him. She says— he would, if he could 1 but as he couldn't— she did for him."

Cool, in meantime, has intercepted Sir Harcourt's London message, and now comes to inform his young master. He luckily finds him alone with Dazzle. Charles is distracted and cannot possibly tear himself away from Grace, but Dazzle, ever ready for emergencies, and knowing how Sir Harcourt is set on the conquest of Dolly Spanker's protectress, forms a plan by which he can, with the aid of that lady, make Sir Harcourt readily consent to his son's marriage with Squire Harkaway's ward and niece. He first assures Cool that Mr. Charles COURTLEY will be on hand in person at the appointed time ; and then proceeds to tackle Sir Harcourt, whose mental thought as he approaches, amounts to " Here's that cursed fellow again !" Dazzle has a secret of importance to disclose to him, and an amusing scene ensues, wherein he tickles the old gentleman's vanity, by warning him against the seductive society of Lady Spanker. At first he is offended, but when Dazzle assures him that he is a distant relative of the Spankers, he is dumbfounded, and thinks he must be related to every distinguished family in

Great Britain. Dazzle persuades him that Lady Gay has been much struck with his address ; that she has evidently laid herself out for display, in an endeavor to entangle him, till the baronet is in ecstasy at his good fortune. Of course he promises all that Dazzle requires, mentally resolving to do nothing of the kind but to effect an easy conquest. They become mutually confidential. Dazzle assures him that the way in which he met Mr. Max Harkaway in Belgrave square, was through his son's charitable disposition.

He held an acceptance of his for £100, with which Charles had relieved a poor man with a large family ; and he actually wheedles the money out of the old man to pay the imaginary debt, first obtaining Charles' endorsement to half a dozen notes, for which he has "stamped" blanks conveniently ready in his pocket-book, while assuring the younger Courtley that he ought to be glad to find a friend who not only gives him good advice, but finds him money as well.

Soon after Grace and Charles meet. A mutual understanding and a declaration take place, and he is in the act of folding her in his arms, when Lady Gay suddenly surprises them. Grace runs away in terrible confusion. Charles makes Lady Spanker his confidant ; tells her who he really is, and asks her assistance. She falls readily and merrily into the plot against Sir Harcourt— but how about Spanker ? He might object ? Oh ! he's an estimable little character. He could not possibly have any objection— and so my lady commences her work at the dinner-table.

The fourth and fifth Acts are necessary to the development of the plot against Sir Harcourt. After dinner the ladies retire, while the gentlemen, as usual in those days, remain to "discuss politics or otherwise chat over their wine. Grace receives a note from Hamilton," renouncing her, and saying that he has left for London, which nearly makes her faint, or at least pretend to ; but he soon turns up again in his real character of Charles Harcourt. She sees through the ruse, and there is considerable love sparring between them. Meanwhile Dolly has taken a little too much wine at the table, and has become brave, she wants to assert his rights as a man and a husband, to the extreme secret delight of Lady Gay, who dearly loves him. Still, knowing the position that both Charles and Grace are in, she carries on her flirtation with Sir Harcourt, till he actually proposes an elopement. Meddle has been watching and interfering with everybody. He watches Charles and Grace, Lady Gay and the baronet. He informs Dolly of the intended elopement, who gets violently jealous and challenges Sir Harcourt. The duel is, however, stopped by Max, through information from Lady Spanker, who fears for her husband's life, and feels that she has gone too far. Charles is arrested by Mr. Soloxon Isaacs, and thus his father is assured that "Mr. Auo-us- tus Hamilton " and his son are one and the same person. Grace pays the debt, at the same time offering her hand and fortune to Charles Courtley. Sir Harcourt, finding that he has made a preposterous fool of himself in his old age, graciously consents. Dolly and Lady Spanker have come to an understanding, and feel happier with each other than ever before, while everybody is anxious to find out who Dazzle is. The substance of his reply is—" that Dazzle i\* Dazzle !— and no one else."

The comedy ends with a tag, which placed in the mouth of Sir Harcourt Courtley, is preposterous, as it consists of moral advice to his son.

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The Development of English Drama (Appleton-Century-Crofts) but gave it a sour little testimonial:

"'London Assurance' is good entertainment for an unthinking audience.'